

# Youth Law News



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## Child & Family Services Reviews: Part II in a Series Foster Parent Training: What the CFS Reviews Do and Don't Tell Us

by Bill Grimm

Training of foster care providers is one of seven systemic factors<sup>1</sup> identified by the U.S. Children's Bureau and incorporated in the Child and Family Service Reviews (CFS Reviews) as necessary to assuring quality care and services to children in foster care. However, the CFS Reviews final reports contain few details, statistics, or evaluations of the training received by foster parents. Few states maintain a central database of training records and many states are unable to report who is currently in training and who has completed it. As a result, conclusions about training are generally drawn from the comments of stakeholders during the on-site reviews. Statewide assessments submitted prior to the on-site review are also used to make a determina-

tion whether this is an area of strength or an area that needs improvement. Since the final reports often provide few details, we have consulted additional sources for the information and analysis that follows. These include CFS Reviews statewide self-assessments, Child and Family Service State Plans,<sup>2</sup> Annual Progress and Services Reports,<sup>3</sup> state statutes, regulations, and policy manuals, and foster parent association handbooks. We also conducted brief interviews with or submitted questions via e-mail to representatives of foster parent associations, agency program managers in several states, and representatives of the organizations that publish the pre-service training curricula in wide use around the country.

### Overview of CFS Review Results

Table 1 reports the training findings of the CFS Reviews. For 27 of the 32 states whose

CFS Reviews were completed in 2001 and 2002, foster and adoptive parent training was rated as a strength.<sup>4</sup> These high marks for training, however, are supported by

very little data.<sup>5</sup> For the most part, they appear to be based upon the statewide self-assessments and an undisclosed number of stakeholder comments during the on-site reviews. When stakeholders disagreed on the adequacy of training, it is unclear how

*(continued on p.4)*

5 For example, Nebraska was rated strength "because foster parents are required to obtain at least 21 hours of pre-service training" and "12 hours of in-service training per year." Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Final Report: Nebraska Child and Family Services Review 67 (2002) [hereinafter Nebraska Final Report]. The report contained little data upon which the reviewers could determine that these requirements were being met.

4 For a compilation of the results for all areas of the CFS Reviews, see Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Summary of the Results of the 2001 and 2002 Child and Family Services Reviews, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/results.htm> (last updated Apr. 15, 2003).

TABLE 1

### CFS Reviews — Foster and Adoptive Parent Training

State	Finding	State	Finding	KEY
Alabama	S	Montana	S	
Alaska	NI	Nebraska	S	NI = Training was rated as Need Improvement.
Arizona	NI	Nevada	N/A	
Arkansas	S	New Hampshire	N/A	
California	NI	New Jersey	N/A	
Colorado	NI	New Mexico	NI	
Connecticut	S	New York	S	
Delaware	S	North Carolina	S	
D.C.	S	North Dakota	S	
Florida	S	Ohio	S	
Georgia	S	Oklahoma	S	
Hawaii	N/A	Oregon	S	
Idaho	N/A	Pennsylvania	S	
Illinois	N/A	Rhode Island	N/A	
Indiana	NI	South Carolina	N/A	
Iowa	N/A	South Dakota	S	
Kansas	S	Tennessee	S	
Kentucky	N/A	Texas	S	
Louisiana	N/A	Utah	N/A	
Maine	N/A	Vermont	S	
Maryland	N/A	Virginia	N/A	
Massachusetts	S	Washington	N/A	
Michigan	S	West Virginia	S	
Minnesota	S	Wisconsin	N/A	
Mississippi	N/A	Wyoming	S	
Missouri	N/A			

1 45 C.F.R. § 1355.34(c)(4)(v) (2003). In addition to staff and provider training, the systemic factors include statewide information system, case review system, quality assurance system, service array, agency responsiveness to the community, and foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention. *Id.* § 1355.34(c).

2 See *id.* § 1357.15.  
3 See *id.* § 1357.16.

by Bill Grimm

*(continued from front)*

## Foster Parent Training

the federal reviewers resolved this disagreement.<sup>6</sup>

Most of the states in which foster parent training was rated a strength have written policies requiring between 27 and 30 hours of pre-service training. Several states, however, with much less rigorous training requirements also inexplicably had their foster parent training rated a strength. Michigan's

6 For example, some Montana stakeholders expressed concern that the new pre-service training that replaced the PRIDE curriculum did not adequately prepare families and suggested it was not of sufficient duration, while others felt that it was adequate and that longer training would make recruitment difficult. Still others reported that training was not provided with consistent frequency. Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Final Report: Montana Child and Family Services Review 71 (2002) [hereinafter Montana Final Report]. The state-

*We can think of no greater influence on the well-being of foster children while they are in care than those who directly minister to their needs.*

*David Fanshel & Eugene B. Shinn,  
Children in Foster Care 496 (1978).*

wide assessment for Montana also reported "there are not sufficient staff to offer the training as frequently as needed." Child & Family Servs. Div., Mont. Dep't of Pub. Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Statewide Assessment 116 (2002) [hereinafter Montana Statewide Assessment]. Despite these concerns, foster parent training in Montana was rated a strength. In West Virginia, "many stakeholders" told reviewers that the pre-service curriculum used in three of the four regions of the state is "out of date" and does not meet the needs of foster and adoptive families. Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Final Report: West Virginia Child and Family Services Review 72 (2002). Reviewers rated foster parent training in West Virginia a strength.

foster parent training program requires a mere 12 hours of pre-service training and 6 hours of annual training.<sup>7</sup> Minnesota allows a child to be placed in a home after completion of only six hours of orientation.<sup>8</sup> Montana stopped using the Child Welfare League of America's PRIDE (27-30 hours) curriculum in 2000, replacing it with an 18-hour pre-service curriculum entitled "Keeping Children Safe."<sup>9</sup> Montana's statewide assessment describes this new curriculum as having "a flexible structure" and reports that it is "adapted by communities to fit their specific needs,"<sup>10</sup> suggesting that pre-service training may be shortened to less than 18 hours. North Dakota's CFS Review final report reported that it uses the 27-hour PRIDE pre-service training curriculum,<sup>11</sup> but its policy states that PRIDE training only must be begun within 6 months of licensing and completed within the first

year.<sup>12</sup> When comparing the explanations in the CFS Reviews final reports of how reviewers determined that a state should pass or fail this part of the review, it is difficult to reconcile many of these states' passing when other states like New Mexico were failed by their review team.<sup>13</sup>

Few states appear to know if training requirements, particularly in-service training mandates, are being satisfied. Kansas concedes its documentation is poor.<sup>14</sup> Some Massachusetts stakeholders reported that the 10 hours per year of ongoing training is "largely ignored."<sup>15</sup> Reviewers in Connecticut were told "there is no mechanism to ensure that foster parents participate in ongoing training and there are no consequences if they do not."<sup>16</sup> Oregon admits that "[d]ata is not collected on the extent of compliance with [foster par-

ent training] policy,"<sup>17</sup> and its statewide assessment suggests that training credits are awarded for forms of instruction or training content that should not be considered acceptable.

Documentation of a foster parent's completion of in-service training is often supposed to be maintained in the foster parent file.<sup>18</sup> However, as we noted in our earlier article, the CFS Reviews did not include a sample of foster parent records in the on-site case reviews.

Those states that do collect statistics and report on compliance with training requirements usually provide very limited data. For example, Massachusetts reports that in FY 2000 about 2400 foster/adoptive parents attended 314 in-service workshops.<sup>19</sup> Data is sometimes skewed by the inclusion of participants other than foster parents—adoptive parents, caseworkers, and "others"—in the count. California's program reports attendance of foster parents, kinship providers, social services staff, and others related to the foster care system.<sup>20</sup> However, it also

12 N.D. Dep't of Human Servs., North Dakota Department of Human Services Manual serv. 622, ch. 5, § 5-35-40(3) (2003).

13 New Mexico requires 10 hours of pre-service and 10 hours annually. Placement staff described training as adequate though management acknowledged it should be updated. Stakeholders like their counterparts in other states felt the training was not in-depth enough; they also complained that foster parents were not used as trainers. Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Final Report: New Mexico Child and Family Services Review 62-63 (2002) [hereinafter New Mexico Final Report].

14 Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Reviews: Final Assessment—Kansas 58 (2001) [hereinafter Kansas Final Report].

15 Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Final Assessment—Massachusetts 43 (2001) [hereinafter Massachusetts Final Report].

16 Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Summary of Findings—Connecticut 68 (2002) [hereinafter Connecticut Final Report].

17 Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Oregon: Child and Family Services Review—Final Report 59 (2001).

18 E.g., Idaho Admin. Code § 16.06.02.621 (2002); Minn. R. 9545.0220(1)(1) (2003). Mississippi requires that the foster parent's training record be attached to each six-month review report filed with the juvenile court. Miss. Code Ann. § 43-15-13(6) (2003).

19 Massachusetts Final Report, *supra* note 15, at 42.

20 California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, Foster and Kinship Care Education Program 2000-2001: Annual Report 8 (2002), [http://www.cccco.edu/divisions/ss/fostercare/attachments/annual\\_rpt11\\_14\\_01.doc](http://www.cccco.edu/divisions/ss/fostercare/attachments/annual_rpt11_14_01.doc).

7 Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Final Report: Michigan Child and Family Services Review 78-79 (2002) [hereinafter Michigan Final Report].

8 Minn. R. 9545.0150(A) (2003).

9 Minnesota has a pilot training program for preparing foster, adoptive, and kinship parents that lasts 36 hours, but the program appears to be voluntary. See Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Reviews: Final Assessment—Minnesota 42 (2001) [hereinafter Minnesota Final Report].

10 Montana Final Report, *supra* note 6, at 70.

11 Montana Statewide Assessment, *supra* note 6, at 36.

12 Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., North Dakota: Child and Family Services Reviews—Final Assessment 43 (2002) [hereinafter North Dakota Final Report].

provides an unduplicated count of each group of participants.<sup>21</sup>

There is evidence that even where training requirements are not the most rigorous or demanding, applicants and foster parents are not complying. Stakeholders in some states reported that foster parents actually receive children before completing the pre-service training.<sup>22</sup> Arkansas foster parents expressed concerns about “fast-track” training to get a home licensed quickly that results in safety hazards for children.<sup>23</sup>

Many states use one of two major pre-service training packages—MAPP/GPS or PRIDE.<sup>24</sup> Generally, comments from foster parents and agency staff about these courses were

positive and complimentary. Stakeholders reported that MAPP was “excellent,”<sup>25</sup> “a positive experience,”<sup>26</sup> and “well-tested and highly regarded.”<sup>27</sup> PRIDE was described as “positive and useful,”<sup>28</sup> but stakeholders in at least one state found it “repetitive, not sufficiently interactive, and not sufficiently realistic.”<sup>29</sup>

During many of the on-site reviews, foster parents frequently complained that a lack of childcare made it difficult for them to attend trainings.<sup>30</sup> The problem includes both finding adequate/approved childcare and obtaining reimbursement for the cost of care. Our own research found that state policies on childcare and reimbursement

for it and other expenses related to training are far from uniform.<sup>31</sup> Though federal funds are available to offset the costs of childcare to enable a foster parent to attend training,<sup>32</sup> not all states appear to reimburse foster parents.

Very few states require that foster parents have an individualized training plan<sup>33</sup>—that is, one that takes into account their existing knowledge and skills, the needs of the children placed in their home, and the additional education and techniques that would help in the care of that child.

Our review of the few approved Program Improvement Plans to address foster parent training reveals that little new is happening. Indiana, for example, addressed the issue in part by changing its policy to allow foster parents to carry over five training credits from one year to the next.<sup>34</sup>

## Federal Training Requirements

Though federal funds have been used for years to pay part of the cost of training foster parents,<sup>35</sup> it was not until 1999 that the law was amended to include a clear mandate of foster parent pre-licensing and in-service training.<sup>36</sup> Though enacted as part of the Foster Care Independence Act,<sup>37</sup> the mandate applies not just to the care of older foster children who are expected to age out of care but rather across the board to all foster parents caring for children of all ages and special needs. The statute requires

that, before a child in foster care under the responsibility of the State is placed with prospective foster parents, the prospective foster parents will be prepared adequately with the appropriate knowledge and skills to provide for the needs of the child, and that such preparation will be continued, as necessary, after the placement of the child.<sup>38</sup>

*(continued on p. 4)*

21 *Id.* at 9.

22 See, e.g., Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Final Report: Colorado Child and Family Services Review 62-63 (2002) [hereinafter Colorado Final Report] (reporting stakeholder comment that “many” foster parents receive children prior to completing the 12-hour pre-service training); Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Final Report: Alaska Child and Family Services Review 70 (2002) [hereinafter Alaska Final Report] (reporting stakeholder comments that “some foster parents care for children for a period of time before receiving any training” and that “about 29 percent of foster homes have no documented training”); Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Final Assessment—Vermont, at F-47 (2001) [hereinafter Vermont Final Report] (listing as an area needing improvement that foster parents “should complete pre-service training before taking placement of a child”). Washington law permits the agency to grant a waiver of pre-service training for up to 90 days after licensure/placement of a child. Wash. Rev. Code § 74.13.250(3) (2003).

23 Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Reviews: Summary of Findings Form—Final Report for the State of Arkansas 63 (2002) [hereinafter Arkansas Final Report].

24 See section entitled “Pre-Service Curricula” *infra* for a description of this training.

25 Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Summary of Findings—Alabama 70 (2002) [hereinafter Alabama Final Report].

26 Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Final Assessment—Florida 58 (2001) [hereinafter Florida Final Report].

27 Massachusetts Final Report, *supra* note 15, at 43. For additional foster parent comments on MAPP, see Pamela Choice et al., Bay Area Soc. Servs. Consortium, Factors Influencing Foster Parents’ Decisions to Continue or Cease Foster Parenting 37-40 (2000).

28 Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Final Assessment—Delaware 65 (2001) [hereinafter Delaware Final Report].

29 Connecticut Final Report, *supra* note 16, at 68.

30 See, e.g., Colorado Final Report, *supra* note 22, at 62; Delaware Final Report, *supra* note 28, at 65; Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Indiana: Child and Families Services Review—Final Report 46 (2002); Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., [hereinafter Indiana Final Report]; Final Report of the Child and Family Services Review of New York State 75 (2002) [hereinafter New York Final Report]; Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Summary of Findings—Oklahoma 72 (2002) [hereinafter Oklahoma Final Report]; see also California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, *supra* note 20, at 15.

31 See section entitled “Obstacles” *infra*.  
32 45 C.F.R. § 1355.20(a) (2003). According to the *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, “[f]oster parent training required by the State agency is an activity beyond the scope of ordinary parental duties. Therefore, the cost of childcare to provide for the foster parent’s attendance at mandatory foster parent training is an allowable expenditure under title IV-E foster care maintenance.” Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Child Welfare Policy Manual § 8.3B.1, <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/cwpm/index.jsp> (last updated Nov. 22, 2002) [hereinafter *Child Welfare Policy Manual*].

33 For examples of the few states that do require such plans see Mich. Admin. Code r. 400.12312 (2001); Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 5103.035 (Anderson 2003); Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Final Report: Ohio Child and Family Services Review 63 (2003) [hereinafter Ohio Final Report].

34 Ind. Family & Soc. Servs. Admin., Child and Family Services Review: Program Improvement Plan 26 (2002).

35 The history of federal funding of foster parent training is set out in the section entitled “Funding of Training” *infra*.

36 Though not explicit, a requirement of foster parent training existed in earlier versions of the federal statute. Prior to 1999, federal law required that foster homes meet professional standards of national organizations like the Child Welfare League of America. 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(10) (2003). As discussed below, those professional standards include requirements of foster parent training.

37 Foster Care Independence Act of 1999, Pub. L. No. 106-169, § 112, 113 Stat. 1822, 1829 (codified at 42 U.S.C. 671(a)).  
38 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(24).

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.3)

## Foster Parent Training

This language suggests that the training required of a foster parent is to be individualized, taking into account the foster parents' existing knowledge and skills and the needs of the particular child placed in their home. It would appear that general requirements for a certain number of hours per year fail to meet the mandates of the statute. State policies that allow a child to be placed in the home before training is completed also appear to violate this provision.

With one exception, states are left with wide discretion in designing their foster parent training programs. Federal law requires that training funds be used

*Foster parent training should provide foster families with the information and skills they need to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.*

*Casey Family Programs, Lighting the Way: Attracting and Supporting Foster Families 9 (2000).*

to provide training to help foster parents, adoptive parents, workers in group homes, and case managers understand and address the issues confronting adolescents preparing for independent living, and will, to the extent possible, coordinate such training with the inde-

pendent living program conducted for adolescents.<sup>39</sup>

### Professional Standards

Professional standards of both the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) and the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services (COA) address many aspects of foster parent pre-service and in-service training. CWLA's *Standards of Excellence for Family Foster Care Services*<sup>40</sup> (CWLA Standards) requires that the agency provide "thorough orientation and pre-service training for prospective foster parents."<sup>41</sup> While the minimum number of hours of training are not specified, CWLA's description of the subject matter to be covered<sup>42</sup> suggests at least the same number of hours required by the MAPP and PRIDE programs—approximately 30 hours. Among the 22 areas to be covered are the following subjects:

- The strengths and needs of children and their families who require foster care services.
- The critical nature and

impact of separation and loss for all parties involved in family foster care.

- The laws, regulations, policies, and values that direct the agency's child welfare and family foster care programs.
- The role of foster parents as effective and essential members of the foster care team and how that team operates within the agency.
- Policies on discipline, confidentiality, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS.
- Health and safety procedures, including first aid, CPR, HIV/AIDS precautions, policies on psychotropic medication, and emergency procedures.
- The importance of developing "cultural competency."
- The impact of fostering on foster parents, their children, and all aspects of their family life.<sup>43</sup>
- Information on child management and supervision practices.<sup>44</sup>

Overall the training program should prepare foster parents with "[t]he knowledge and practice skills necessary to be a foster parent."<sup>45</sup>

In addition to prescribing the content of foster parent orientation and pre-service training, *CWLA Standards*

provides that the training program should be organized and implemented by "qualified social work staff members" who plan and provide the training "in collaboration with experienced foster parents who can model the value and practice of teamwork."<sup>46</sup> It also should be integrated with the process of assessing and selecting foster parents.<sup>47</sup> Both of these concepts are part of the predominant pre-service curricula in use around the country.

*CWLA Standards* expresses no preference for particular training methodologies but does refer to "structured opportunities" that allow foster parents "to acquire the competencies (knowledge and skills) . . . to provide quality foster care."<sup>48</sup> Elsewhere, *CWLA Standards* suggests the importance of group training with other foster parents.<sup>49</sup>

Agencies also should provide "accessible, quality, competency-based in-service training for foster parents."<sup>50</sup> Again, *CWLA Standards* does not specify a minimum number of annual in-service hours, but it does provide a list of particular competencies and subjects to be included in the training:

<sup>46</sup> *Id.* § 3.10.  
<sup>47</sup> *Id.* § 3.12.  
<sup>48</sup> *Id.* § 3.7.  
<sup>49</sup> *See id.* § 3.34 (stating that the in-service training program should help foster parents build on the basic competencies, identify and develop advanced and specialized competencies, and continue relationships with other foster parents).  
<sup>50</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> *Id.* § 677(b)(3)(D).  
<sup>40</sup> Child Welfare League of America, *Standards of Excellence for Family Foster Care Services* (rev. ed. 1995) [hereinafter *CWLA Standards*]. The preface to *CWLA Standards* points out in several places that the standards are intended "to be used as *ideals or goals* for practice in the field of child welfare services." *Id.* at xvii (emphasis added); *see also id.* at vi, xvii-xviii. Having been in existence now for almost a decade, we wonder at what point they will be standards of practice and not mere goals for the indefinite future.  
<sup>41</sup> *Id.* § 3.7.  
<sup>42</sup> *See id.*

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*  
<sup>44</sup> *Id.* § 3.30. This information also is to be covered in in-service training. *Id.*  
<sup>45</sup> *Id.* § 3.7.

- Helping children to develop self-esteem.
- Promoting cultural identity.
- Responding to signs and symptoms of physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional maltreatment.
- Helping children to learn appropriate behaviors.
- Supporting children's contacts with their parents, siblings, and kin.
- Helping children with family reunification, adoption, and preparation for young adult life.
- Understanding and managing the effects of chemical dependency.
- Working as a member of a team.<sup>51</sup>
- “[W]ays of approaching the sexual development needs of children and young people whose histories include sexual abuse or exploitation,” including training on types and indicators of sexual abuse, behavioral characteristics of children who have been sexually abused or exploited, skills for working with children who have been sexually abused, and behaviors that would indicate the need for specialized treatment for the abused child.<sup>52</sup>
- Information on child management and supervision practices.<sup>53</sup>

51 *Id.*

52 *Id.* § 2.77. This information also is to be covered in pre-service training. *Id.*

53 *Id.* § 3.30. This information also is to be covered in pre-service training. *Id.*

- Resources and supports for fostering children.<sup>54</sup>

CWLA Standards also directs the agency to create a “foster parent development plan” that “document[s] the strengths and competencies of the foster parent[] and identif[ies] those areas in which additional training or other supports are needed,”<sup>55</sup> and the agency should maintain, in its foster parent files, information on foster parents’ training activities.<sup>56</sup> In addition, the agency should monitor the needs of foster parents for individualized training.<sup>57</sup>

COA’s standards<sup>58</sup> are in many respects similar to CWLA’s standards. With one exception, COA’s standards do not set a minimum number of hours for either pre-service or in-service training.<sup>59</sup> Agencies are required to recruit experienced foster parents to participate in and co-lead the orientation, pre-service education, and in-service education of other foster parents.<sup>60</sup> Both an orientation to the agency<sup>61</sup> and training are required of foster parents. Training should promote the competence of foster parents and enable them

54 *Id.* This information also is to be covered in pre-service training. *Id.*

55 *Id.* § 3.35.

56 *Id.* § 3.37.

57 *Id.* § 3.29.

58 Council on Accreditation for Children & Family Servs., Inc., Standards and Self-Study Manual (7th ed., version 1.1, 2001) [hereinafter COA Standards and Self-Study Manual].

59 Treatment foster parents must receive 30 hours of competency-based training before receiving a child for placement, must receive first aid and CPR training from a certified instructor before receiving a child for placement, and must receive 24 hours of annual in-service training after receiving a child for placement. *Id.* § S21.15.06.

60 *Id.* § S21.9.05.

61 *Id.* § G7.1.

to provide appropriate care to the foster children placed in their home.<sup>62</sup>

COA’s standards do not appear to distinguish between mandatory pre-service and in-service subjects but do contain a lengthy list of topics that must be included in the foster parent education program. Among other topics, foster parents must be educated about the following subjects:

- Caregivers’ rights and responsibilities and “their partnership role with the organization in providing care and protection to the child, and support and service to the biological family.”
- The individual needs of children placed in their homes, including the needs of abused and neglected children and “the importance of the cultural and ethnic contexts for service.”
- “[S]ensitive and responsive practices” to use with biological parents.<sup>63</sup>
- How to access government payments on behalf of foster children, including Medicaid cards, social security, and other public assistance.<sup>64</sup> Techniques for de-escalating conflict.
- Management of aggressive or out-of-control behavior.<sup>65</sup>

The list of topics in COA’s

62 *Id.* § S21.9.

63 *Id.* § S21.9.02.

64 *Id.* § S21.9.06.

65 *Id.* § G7.4.02.

standards seems much more focused on policy and “risk management strategies”<sup>66</sup> and much less on the skills and knowledge emphasized in CWLA’s standards.

COA’s standards, however, go beyond specifying training requirements for foster parents generally to include additional training requirements that apply to foster parents who fall into different categories—those who provide treatment foster care, those who provide foster care for children with special needs, those who provide foster care for medically fragile children, and those who provide foster care for unaccompanied minor refugees and immigrants. For example, foster parents who provide treatment foster care must receive “appropriate training in the organization’s behavior management practices . . . in accord with their responsibilities.”<sup>67</sup> This training is to occur both initially and in an ongoing manner.<sup>68</sup> After training in behavior-management practices is completed, the agency must conduct “post-testing . . . to ensure competency.”<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, this is the only place in either set of standards that requires some test of the training’s effectiveness.

(continued on p.6)

66 *Id.* § G7.4.

67 *Id.* § G10.3; see also *id.* § G10 note (explaining that foster parents who provide treatment foster care are bound by the applicable G10 standards, even though the language of the standards themselves refers to “personnel”).

68 *Id.* § G10.3.01.

69 *Id.* § G10.3.06.

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.5)

## Foster Parent Training

### State Training Requirements

Virtually all states mandate some type of pre-service and in-service training. Virginia and Wisconsin appear to be the lone exceptions.<sup>70</sup> However, there is a wide disparity in the number of hours of pre-licensing and in-service training required among the states. Minimum training hours are sometimes set by state statute. In other states the child welfare agency is delegated the authority to determine training requirements. Missouri's statute simply directs the agency "to provide foster parents with training, pre-service and in-service, and support."<sup>71</sup> In state-supervised/county-

county may require training beyond the state minimums.<sup>72</sup>

In **Chart 1** we list separately each state's requirements (in number of hours) for pre-service and in-service training. For most states we were able to identify the statute or regulation upon which the requirement is based. For those states where there either was no statute or regulation or where the statutes and/or regulations simply directed that training should be as required by the agency, we attempted to fill in the blank by contacting state officials and/or foster care association representatives. If the written policy does not specify the number of hours, we indicate that in the chart.

### Training Content

Some statutes go so far as to specify the subjects that must be included in pre-service or in-service training.<sup>73</sup> Oklahoma, for example, lists behavior management and parent-child conflict resolution among the required topics.<sup>74</sup> Washington's legislature mandated that pre-service

training include:

- information about the potential impact of placement on foster children;
- social service agency administrative processes;
- the requirements, responsibilities, expectations, and skills needed to be a foster parent;
- attachment, separation, and loss issues faced by birth parents, foster children, and foster parents;
- child management and discipline;
- birth family relationships; and
- helping children leave foster care.<sup>75</sup>

California's statutes also contain a list of topics to be included in pre-placement and annual training.<sup>76</sup> Foster parent applicants in California must be provided with an overview of the child protective system, as well as information on the effects of child abuse and neglect on child development, positive discipline and the importance of self-esteem, health issues in foster care, and accessing education and health services available to foster children.<sup>77</sup> Annual post-placement training must cover many of the same

topics.<sup>78</sup> For foster parents caring for "youth," their annual training must include emancipation and independent living skills.<sup>79</sup>

Louisiana requires that the department's training program include information on obtaining needed services for foster children, discipline, legal aspects of foster care, and working with parents and the agency.<sup>80</sup> Illinois's training program must include

training and information on the [foster parents'] right to be heard, to bring a mandamus action, and to intervene in juvenile court . . . and the availability of the hotline . . . that foster parents may use to report incidents of misconduct or violation of rules by Department employees, service providers, or contractors.<sup>81</sup>

During the 21 hours of pre-service training required in Florida, the areas covered must include the following topics:

- prevention of placement disruptions;
- management of difficult child behavior;
- role of the foster parent as treatment team member;
- care of children at various developmental levels, including discipline; and
- issues of separation, loss,

*Child welfare experts agree that adequate training is critical to foster parent retention.*

*Steve Christian, Supporting and Retaining Foster Parents, NCSL State Legislative Report Apr. 2002, at 1, 6.*

administered systems, the

70 For information on Virginia, see Va. Dep't of Soc. Servs., Child and Family Services Plan: FY 2003, at 25 (calling for an "increase in the number of local departments that require pre-service and in-service training for foster and adoptive parents"). In Wisconsin, participation in training is voluntary and dependent upon availability of funds. Wis. Stat. Ann. § 48.675 (West 2003).  
71 Mo. Ann. Stat. § 210.566(2)(1) (West 2002). Other states have similar statutes. See, e.g., Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 8-503(A)(4)(e) (2003); N.J. Stat. Ann. § 30:4C-27.15(a) (West 2003).

72 See, e.g., Cal. Health & Safety Code § 1529.2(c) (Deering 2003).  
73 Many state administrative codes and policy manuals also specify required or acceptable training topics. See, e.g., Ala. Admin. Code r. 660-5-29-02(2) (2003); Ariz. Admin. Code R6-5-5825(A) (2003) (listing 15 topics that shall be covered in pre-service training); D.C. Mun. Regs. tit. 29, § 6026.3 (2003); N.C. Admin. Code tit. 10, r. 41F.0814(b) (2003). Iowa's list is probably the longest, with 41 topics. See Iowa Admin. Code r. 441-117.7(2) (2003).  
74 Okla. Stat. Ann. tit. 10, § 7212 (West 2003).

75 Wash. Rev. Code § 74.13.250 (2003).  
76 See Cal. Health & Safety Code § 1529.2; see also Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code § 16500.1(b)(7) (addressing training to promote working effectively with families and communities); Cal. Health & Safety Code § 1506 (b)(2) (requiring at least one hour of training regarding the reporting of child abuse/neglect for private agency certified foster homes).  
77 Cal. Health & Safety Code § 1529.2(b)(3).

78 See *id.* § 1529.2(b)(4).  
79 *Id.* § 1529.2(b)(4)(D).  
80 La. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 46:283(C)(1)(a) (West 2003).  
81 20 Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann. 505/22.2 (West 2003).

and attachment for children entering care.<sup>82</sup>

### Persons Who Must Complete Training

Although *CWLA Standards* provides that the agency should “require foster mothers and foster fathers to participate in training that meets their mutually assessed training needs,”<sup>83</sup> state policies are sometimes vague and actual practices are difficult to determine.

If there are two foster parents in the home, often only the “primary” caregiver is required to complete the training course.<sup>84</sup> California’s statute requires completion of training by “persons in the home who are serving as foster parents.”<sup>85</sup> Alaska differentiates between one-parent and two-parent foster homes. For a one-parent home, the in-service training requirement is 10 hours annually, while a two-parent home must complete 15 hours “shared between the two foster parents,” with each completing at least five hours of training annually.<sup>86</sup> Kentucky regulations specify that “each adult who resides in the household and provides care” must attend the 30 hours of initial fam-

ily preparation.<sup>87</sup> Utah and Massachusetts have some of the clearest and most demanding policy statements on this issue. Massachusetts’ policy states that

[b]oth parents of two parent households are required to attend a MAPP group together, and absence from more than two sessions of MAPP automatically results in the applicants’ withdrawal from that group series.<sup>88</sup>

Utah’s regulations mandate that

[a]t least one spouse shall complete the entire training series in order for the home to be licensed. The other spouse shall attend at least one third of the training.<sup>89</sup>

Interestingly, we could find no research examining the impact of one or both parents’ attending training upon foster parent or child outcomes.<sup>90</sup>

### Specialized/Therapeutic Homes

Foster parents caring for special needs children or acting as therapeutic foster parents

are usually required to complete more training before licensing and a greater number of in-service hours annually. For example, applicants for a therapeutic foster family home license in Indiana must complete 30 hours of pre-service training—10 hours beyond that required of other foster parents. Thereafter, they must complete 20 hours of training each year to maintain their license.<sup>91</sup> In Alaska, a foster home providing care for pregnant or parenting adolescents must complete an additional six hours of training in topics including prenatal nutrition; human sexuality and prevention of disease; depression; and the effects of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco on children.<sup>92</sup> In North Carolina, “in order for a foster parent to utilize physical restraint holds, each foster parent shall complete at least 16 hours of training in behavior management.”<sup>93</sup>

Foster parents who complete specialized training are usually eligible for higher rates. Kentucky authorizes different rates of care for emergency shelter, medically fragile, advanced medically fragile, degreed medically fragile, basic family treatment, and advanced family treatment homes. Eligibility for these

rates of care depends in part upon the parents having completed additional training.<sup>94</sup>

### Indian Child Welfare Policies

Foster homes licensed or approved by Indian tribes and tribal organizations on or near reservations are subject to standards established by the tribes.<sup>95</sup> Those standards need not be the same as the standards adopted by the state agency.<sup>96</sup> Consequently, tribes are free to determine what, if any, training is required of foster parents. State-sponsored trainings may be open to tribal foster parents.<sup>97</sup>

Sample standards and regulations developed for tribes suggest that foster parents merely begin an “orientation prior to receiving the first child in placement.”<sup>98</sup> Thereafter, the foster parents must participate in a minimum of 12 hours of annual training related to foster care. A list of topics is also included.<sup>99</sup> “Training” is broadly defined to include the experience that parenting a special needs child teaches the parent about how to deal with the special needs and the lessons learned from the child’s psychologist, teachers, and

(continued on p. 10)

82 Fla. Stat. Ann. § 409.175(14)(b) (West 2003).

83 *CWLA Standards*, *supra* note 40, § 3.34.

84 See, e.g., Md. Dep’t of Human Servs., Out-of-Home Placement Services: Foster Care Training Requirements, <http://www.dhr.state.md.us/ssa/foster/training.htm> (last revised Jan. 15, 2003); Div. of Soc. Servs., Navajo Nation, Regulations for Family Foster Homes § 1(D)(1)(j) (1995).

85 Cal. Health & Safety Code § 1529.2(b)(1) (Deering 2003).

86 Alaska Admin. Code tit. 7, § 50.250(g) (2003).

87 922 Ky. Admin. Regs. 1:350, § 8(2) (2002). Adult children or elderly persons in the home who are not responsible for the care of the foster child are not required to attend the training. *Id.* §8(3).

88 Mass. Dep’t of Soc. Servs., Policy #91-003R: Massachusetts Approach to Partnerships in Parenting 386niii (1991).

89 Utah Admin. Code 501-12-5(B) (2003).

90 Boyd and Remy did find that foster homes in which both parents were trained were more involved in foster parent (organization) activities. Lawrence H. Boyd, Jr. & Linda L. Remy, *Is Foster-Parent Training Worthwhile?*, 52 Soc. Service Rev. 275, 291 (1978).

91 Ind. Code § 12-17.4-4-1.5(d)(2), (e) (2003). For examples of other states that require additional training for therapeutic foster parents, see Mo. Ann. Stat. § 210.543 (West 2002); Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §§ 5103.13, 5103.13.1 (Anderson 2003); Ariz. Admin. Code R6-5-5850 (2003) (requiring double the hours required of other homes); Code Me. R. § 10-148, ch. 15, § 11 (2003); Md. Regs. Code tit. 07, § 02.21.10 C (2003) (requiring 20 annual in-service hours versus six hours for other foster parents).

92 Alaska Admin. Code tit. 7, § 50.645(b)(3) (2003).

93 N.C. Admin. Code tit. 10, r. 41E.0814(f) (June 2003).

94 See 922 Ky. Admin. Regs. 1:350, § 18 (2002). Hawaii is another state that provides additional payments for special services provided by specially trained foster parents. See Code Haw. R. § 17-834-7 (2003).

95 45 C.F.R. § 1355.20 (2003).

96 25 U.S.C. § 1931 (2003); Child Welfare Policy Manual, *supra* note 32, § 9.2.

97 Okla. Admin. Code § 340:75-1-207 (2000).

98 Nat’l Indian Child Welfare Ass’n, Development and Implementation of Tribal Foster Care Standards 21 (2000).

99 *Id.* at 22.

Chart 1

State	Pre-Service Hours	Pre-Service Statute/Regulation	In-Service Hours	In-Service Statute/Regulation	Comments
Alabama	30 hours	Ala. Admin. Code §§660-5-29-.07 (2)(a)4 & 660-5-29-.02(2)(a)(1)	15 hours/year	Ala. Admin., Code §§660-5-29-.07 (2)(a)4 & 660-5-29-.02(2)(a)(2)	Curriculum specified. New rule effective August 2002. Prior to new guidelines, no in-service training requirements
Alaska	6 hours	Alaska Admin. Code tit. 7 §§ 0.030 (a), 50.250 (j) I	10-15 hours /year	Alaska Admin. Code tit. 7 section 50.250 (g). 10 hours for single foster parent. 15 hours for couple with each completing min. 5 hours	Training mandated only if orientation and pre-service training program is available in the community. Admin Code 50.250 (j) permits caregiver to apply any orientation/pre-service in excess of six hours to annual in-service requirement. Alaska Stat. 47.14.115 requires that quarterly training be "made available"
Arizona	6 /12 hours	Ariz. Rev. Stat. 8-509 B. (6 hours). Ariz. Admin. Code R6-5-5825 ("at least 12 clock hours")	6 hours/year	Ariz. Rev. Stat. 8-509 C (6 hours). Ariz. Admin. Code R6-5-5825	Curriculum specified
Arkansas	30 hours	Ark. Admin. Code §016 15 010 Section 11 F	15 hours/year	Ark. Admin. Code §016 15 010 Section 11 F	
California	12 hours	Calif. Health & Safety Code § 1529.2	8 hours /year	Calif. Health & Safety Code § 1529.2	State-supervised/county administered. Trng varies county to county
Colorado	12/27 hours	Colo. Rev. Stat. 26-6-106 (q)(I)(A)	20 hours/year	Colo Rev. Stat. 26-6-106 (q)(I)(B)	Only 12 hours must be completed before child placed and remaining 15 within 3 months
Connecticut	unspecified	Conn. Agencies Regs. 17a-145-151 (e); Conn. Dep't of Children & Families Policy Manual 41-16-6	45 hours within 18 months of initial licensure and 9 hours/year thereafter	Conn. Dep't of Children and Families Policy Manual 41-26-5	Final Report (p.67) states PRIDE required as pre-service
Delaware	unspecified	Del. Dep't of Services for Children, Youth and Families (DSCYF), Div. of Family Services, Policy Manual, Placement Resources, B-1 (j)	24 during first year / 5 hours thereafter	Del. DSCYF, Div. of Family Services, Policy Manual, Placement Resources D-8 & D-9 (Module One and Love & Logic); Del. Admin. Code 45.300.008 Section 102 (B)	Final Report (p.64) states that pre-service requirement is PRIDE. Policy Manual requires completion of unspecified number of hours foster parent training in order for initial approval to be granted
District of Columbia	30 hours	D.C. Mun. Regs. tit. 29 §6026.2 & 6026.3	15 hours/year	D.C. MUN. REGS, tit.29 §6026.5	Curriculum specified
Florida	21/30 hours	Fla. Stat. Ann. 409.175 (14)(a) & (b); Fla. Admin. Code Ann. 65C-13.003	8 hours and attend annual conference	Fl. Stat. Ann. 409.175 (14)(d)	Statute requires 21 hours but regulations provide for 30 hour GPS-MAPP pre-service training
Georgia	unspecified	Ga. Comp. R. & Regs r. 290-9-2-.07	15 /8 hours/year	Ga. Comp. R. & Regs r. 290-9-2-.07	Final Report (p. 48) states 30 hours MAPP-GPS classroom trng before license. Applies to child-placing agencies. In-service requires 15 hours for parents planning to provide foster care for children over the age of 12 months, or eight hours of training for parents planning to provide foster care for children 12 months of age or younger
Hawaii	unspecified	Hawaii Rev. Stat. § 346-17 (c)(2)	none		Relatives & special licensed providers must complete training within one year of first child's placement. Haw. Rev. Stat. § 346-17 (c)(2)
Idaho	unspecified	Idaho Admin. Code tit 6 r. 408 & 621	10 hours /year	Idaho Admin. Code tit 6 r. 408	Annual Progress & Service Rep't (pp. 47-49, June, 2002) indicates each region in state has different pre-service training plan varying from 12-16 hours orientation
Illinois	unspecified	Ill. Admin. Code tit. 89 402.12 (k) & (l)	16 hours	Ill. Admin. Code tit. 89 402.12 (m)	Pre-service hours unspecified but Foster PRIDE or equivalent required by law
Indiana	20 hours	Ind. Admin. Code tit. 470 r. 3-1-15.5I	10 hours	Ind. Admin. Code tit. 470 r. 3-1-15.5I	
Iowa	30 hours	Iowa Code Ann. 237.5A; Iowa Admin. Code r. 441-113.8	6 hours/year	Iowa Code Ann. 237.5A; Iowa Admin. Code r. 441-113.8 (3)	
Kansas	30 hours	Kan. SRS Foster Parent Handbook (March 2003)(Draft)	6 hours/year	Kan. Admin. Regs. §28-4-175 (d)(2)	
Kentucky	30 hours	922 Ky. Admin Regs, 1:350 §8	6 hours/year	922 Ky. Admin. Regs, 1:350 §12	
Louisiana	30 hours	La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §283 C.; La. Dep't of Soc. Servs, Office of Community Servs, Program Policy Manual §9-510 (July, 2002)	15/5	La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §283 C.; La. Dep't of Soc. Servs, Office of Community Servs, Program Policy Manual §9-670 (May, 2003)	In two-parent households, 15 hours are shared but each parent must receive at least five hours. Curriculum specified. Relatives must complete ten hours pre-service
Maine	unspecified	Code Me. R. 10-148 Ch. 15, § 9 A. (18)	24 hours / 2 years	Code Me. R. 10-148 Ch. 15, § 9 A.(19)	Introductory training program for foster parents or its equivalent offered or approved by the Department of Human Services prior to being licensed
Maryland	27 hours	Md. Regs. Code tit. 07. Section 02.25.07 B. (18); Md. Regs. Code tit. .07 .02.25.13	6 hours/year	Md. Regs. Code tit. 07. Section 02.25.07 B.(18); Md. Regs. Code tit. .07 .02.25.13	
Massachusetts	unspecified	Mass. Regs. Code tit. 110, §7.107 (1)	unspecified	Mass. Regs. Code tit. 110, §7.104 (1)(I) (gen. req'd for annual plan & trng but hrs not specified)	Regs require completion of the Dep'ts foster/pre-adoptive parent pre-service training program. Hours not specified. Most regions provide MAPP trng in eight 3-hour sessions
Michigan	6/12 hours	Mich. Admin. Code r. 400.9415 & r. 400.12312	12 hours/first 2 years and 6 hours/year thereafter	Mich. Admin. Code r. 400.9415 & r. 400.12312	12 hours training within six months of initial licensing and before placement of child; can include six-hour orientation
Minnesota	6 hours	Minn. R. 9545.0150 A	12 hours/year	Minn. R. 9545.0150 C.	Foster Parent must begin six hours of orientation prior to receiving the first child in placement. Curriculum specified
Mississippi	0/12 hours	Miss. Code Ann. §43-15-13 (6); Code Miss. R 11.111.001 Vol. IV Div. of Family & Children's Svc. Manual	12 hours every 2 years	Code Miss. R 11.111.001 Vol IV Division of Family & Children's Services Manual	Pre-service hours required no later than 90 days after child placed, but regs required before accepting child into care

Chart 1 (cont'd)

State	Pre-Service Hours	Pre-Service Statute/Regulation	In-Service Hours	In-Service Statute/Regulation	Comments
Missouri	12 hours	Mo. Rev. Stat. §210.566; MO. Code Regs. Ann. tit.13 §40-60.030 (4)	12 hours/year	Mo. Rev. Stat. §210.566; MO. Code Regs. Ann. tit.13 §40-60.030 (4)	
Montana	unspecified orientation	Mont. Admin. R. 37.97.1019	15 hours/year	Mont. Admin. R. 37.97.1019	Curriculum specified. PRIDE replaced in 2000 with new curriculum – “Keeping Children Safe”
Nebraska	21 hours	Neb. Admin. Code §6-003.34	12 hours/year	Neb. Admin. Code §6-003.34	Specifies acceptable types of training
Nevada	8 hours	Nev. Admin. Code ch. 424, §270	4 hours/year	Nev. Admin. Code ch. 424, §270	Third Ann. Progr & Serv. Rept says “Nev. adopted a 36 hour pre-service training curriculum in 1997. “ Interviews with county and state officials confirmed that pre-service training varies from county to county from 18 to 27 hours
New Hampshire	21 hours	N.H. Code Admin. R. Ann.He-C 6446.12	16 hours over 2 year licensing period	N.H. Code Admin. R. Ann. HE-C 6446.19	
New Jersey	15 hours	N.J. Stat. Ann. §30:4C-27.6e N.J. Admin. Code tit. 10 § 122C-2.7	14/7 every 2 years	N.J. STAT. ANN. §30:4C-27.6f; N.J. ADMIN. CODE tit. 10 § 122C-2.7	14 hours every 2 years for primary, 7 hours for secondary caretakers
New Mexico	10 hours	N.M. Admin. Code tit. 8 section 27.3.10.1	10 hours/year	N.M. Admin. Code tit. 8 section 27.3.12.2	
New York	unspecified	N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 18 §443.2 (d) & (e)	Unspecified	N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 18 §443.2 (e)	Curriculum specified. Final Report (p.p.74-75) states MAPP used in some areas for pre-service. Draft policy designating MAPP as state approved pre-service pending. Emergency homes must have 15 hours within 4 months of approval and 6 hours annually. N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. tit. 18 §446.5
North Carolina	30 hours	N.C. Admin. Code tit. 10, r.41F.0814 (b)	20 hours/ 2 years	N.C. Admin. Code tit. 10, r.41F.0814 (d)	License renewal required every two years. N.C. Admin. Code tit. 10, r.41F.0803 Curriculum specified
North Dakota	4 hours	N.D. Dep’t of Human Servs., DHS Manual serv. 622, ch. 5, § 5-35-40(1)(a)	12 hours/year	N.D. Dep’t of Human Servs., DHS Manual serv. 622, ch. 5, § 5-35-40 (2)	Final Report (p. 43) states 27 hour PRIDE is required for “newly licensed” foster parents and 20 hours annually. Manual states PRIDE must begin within 6 months of licensure and completed within first year. DHS Manual serv. 622, ch. 5, § 5-35-40 (3) (January, 2003)
Ohio	12/24 hours	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §5103.31	20 hours/year	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. §5103.32	No child placed until completed additional 12 hours of preplacement training
Oklahoma	27 hours	Okla. Admin. Code §340:75-7-14	12 hours/year	Okla. Admin. Code §340:75-7-69	Pre-service incl. 21 hours Oklahoma PATH and 6 hours Behavior Crisis Management Training
Oregon	orientation within first 30 days	Ore. Admin. R. 413-200-0349	10 hrs/year or “appropriate training plan to meet needs of children in their care”	Ore. Admin. R. 413-200-0349	
Pennsylvania	unspecified	55 Pa. Code §3700.38	6 hours/year	55 Pa. Code §3700.65	State supervised/county administered
Rhode Island	unspecified	R.I. Code R. 03 000 021 II. F. & IV.J.; R.I. Code R. 03 240 801 I. & II. A. 16	unspecified	R.I. Code R. 03 000 021 IV.J.	A course of pre-service orientation is required. Agency website states eight sessions of three hours each for a total of 24 hours
South Carolina	14 hours	S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 114-550 G. (5)	14/28	S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 114-550 G. (5)	28 hours for relicensure after 1/1/2003
South Dakota	30 hours	S.D. Admin. R. 67:42:05:03	6 hours/year	S.D. Admin. R. 67:42:05:03	
Tennessee	30 hours	Tenn. Dep’t of Children’s Services, Administrative Pol. & Proc. 16.4 B	15 hours/year	Tenn. Dep’t of Children’s Services, Administrative Pol. & Proc. 16.7 A & B	
Texas	8 / 30 hours	40 Texas Admin. Code 720.39 E	20	40 Texas Admin. Code 720.39	Child placing agency regs. set minimum of 8 pre-service hours. Texas CFSR Statewide Assessment ( at p. 48) states CPS requires 30 hours of PRIDE pre-service
Utah	unspecified	Utah Admin. Code §§R501-12-4.G. & R501-12-5	unspecified	Utah Admin. Code § R501-12-5	UFCF reports 32 hour pre-service
Vermont	none	Vermont Department of Social & Rehabilitation Services (SRS) Soc. Servs. Policy Manual No. 93 (6/12/03)	none		Final Report, p. F-47, states PRIDE adopted in 2001. No in-service trng required. Draft policy requires completion of Foundation Training “before the end of the first year of licensure.” State licensing regulations at §300 state “Foster parents shall participate in training determined by the child placing agency to be necessary for the care of foster children”
Virginia	unspecified	22 Va. Admin. Code 40-141-70	20	22 Va. Admin. Code 40-141-70	Training must be completed within 6 months of initial licensure “when training available”
Washington	unspecified	Wash. Admin. Code 388-148-0520	unspecified	Wash. Admin. Code 388-25-0390, 388-148-0520	Applicants must attend required orientation and preservice training programs “that the department sponsors”
West Virginia	unspecified	W. Va. Code St. R. §78-2-20	15/12	W. Va. Code St. R. §78-2-20	Reg. applies to child placing agencies. 15 hours in-service first year and 12 every year thereafter
Wisconsin	none		none		State supervised/county administered system. Participation in training is voluntary. Wis. Stat. Ann. §48.675. Training is “dependent upon availability of funds” and none are available. Wisc. Admin. Code §HFS 56.12 Approx. 1/3 of counties in state provide pre-service (IHS)
Wyoming	16 hours	Wy. Rules & Regs FAMS PS Ch. 7, section 2 (c)	16 hours	Wy. Rules & Regs FAMS PS Ch. 7, section 2 c	Final Report (p. 66) states that 27 hours PRIDE mandatory as of July, 2002. Curriculum specified

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.9)

## Foster Parent Training

other service providers.<sup>100</sup> Foster parents operating emergency shelter or special services homes are required to complete an additional six hours of annual training “related to the special needs of these children.”<sup>101</sup>

The Navajo Nation’s policy handbook specifies that 10 hours of pre-placement training must be completed before a child is placed into a foster home. Foster parents caring for a child with special medical needs must have an additional six hours of training. Eight hours of in-service training are required every year.<sup>102</sup> The San Carlos Apache Tribe licensing standards require 10 hours

the caseworker for license renewal.”<sup>104</sup>

### Recent Changes

Over the last few years, several states, either through legislation or changes in licensing regulations, have increased training requirements for applicants and foster parents.

New Jersey’s Foster Parent Licensing Act, enacted in 2002, mandated that foster parents participate in pre-service training prior to licensure and that they participate in in-service training every two years.<sup>105</sup> While the legislature specified the minimum number of in-service hours (14), it left it up to the commissioner to adopt standards governing pre-service training. In July 2003, the Division of Youth and Family Services adopted regulations under which “[e]ach new foster parent applicant and potential primary caretaker” is required to complete a minimum of 15 hours of “Parents as Tender

Healers” pre-service training prior to licensure.<sup>106</sup>

Until last year, Iowa used a condensed version (12 hours)

of a 21-hour pre-service curriculum developed at NOVA University in the early 1980s and revised by staff at Iowa

State University in 1992. In 1990, Iowa’s Department of Human Services, concerned about the increasing difficulties of children entering care, considered adopting an alternative training program, such as MAPP. It was unable to generate sufficient support for changing foster parent training requirements until last year.<sup>107</sup> During the 2001 session, the Iowa legislature conditioned foster parent licensure on the completion of 30 hours of training, more than doubling the old 12-hour requirement.<sup>108</sup> Iowa has now adopted the PS-MAPP pre-service curriculum. No change was made in the six-hour annual in-service requirement.

Ohio enacted a foster parent training bill in 2001, increasing pre-placement and ongoing training for all foster caregivers. All “specialized” foster caregivers were required to complete a training course preparing them to act as surrogate parents for children receiving or eligible for special educational services.<sup>109</sup> As originally introduced, the Ohio legislation would have increased the pre-service requirement from 12 to 36 hours and the annual in-service hours from 12 to 24. The final version of the bill reduced the require-

<sup>107</sup> Participants in a foster/adoptive focus group conducted as part of Iowa’s statewide self-assessment reported that training prepared them inadequately for the children placed in their homes and that this inadequacy was a causal factor in unstable placements and the rate of abuse in foster care. Iowa Dep’t of Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Iowa Statewide Assessment 45 (2003).

<sup>108</sup> H.B. 2518, 79th Gen. Assem., 2d Sess. (Iowa 2002) (amending Iowa Code § 237.5A).

<sup>109</sup> H.B. 332, 123rd Gen. Assem., Reg. Sess. (Ohio 2000).

ments to 24 hours of initial training and 20 hours of annual training but authorized agencies to waive up to four hours of the in-service requirement. The costs of implementing the changes in foster parent training, including paying parents a stipend for completing training, appear to have been a factor in the amendments. The fiscal note for the bill as enacted was \$3 million less than the original proposal.

Prior to legislative changes in 2001, Colorado statutes required foster parents to complete 12 hours of initial training and six hours of annual in-service training. Regulations had increased the annual in-service training requirements from six to 20 hours.<sup>110</sup> Senate Bill 01-012 increased pre-license training to 27 hours and incorporated the more stringent in-service training mandate of the regulation.<sup>111</sup> The final version of the bill reduced the originally proposed pre-service hours from 30 to 27 and also established a grace period, allowing a foster parent to complete 15 of the initial 27 hours within three months of a child’s placement.

### Waivers of Training Requirements

State policies exempting foster parents from some or all training requirements vary considerably. Indiana allows foster parents and applicants to substitute education in

of pre-service training and specify eight topics to be covered.<sup>103</sup> Additional annual training is “as developed by

<sup>100</sup> *Id.* at 21.

<sup>101</sup> *Id.* at 22.

<sup>102</sup> Div. of Soc. Servs., Navajo Nation, Regulations for Family Foster Homes § I(D)(1)(j) (1995).

<sup>103</sup> Tribal Soc. Servs., San Carlos Apache Tribe, Licensing Standards for Foster Care Providers Program § II(F)(7).

<sup>104</sup> *Id.* But see Tribal Soc. Servs., San Carlos Apache Tribe, Foster Parent Handbook 15 (2002) (requiring six hours of training to renew license each year).

<sup>105</sup> Foster Parent Licensing Act, ch. 419, 2001 N.J. Laws 419 (2002) (codified at N.J. Stat. Ann. § 30:4C-27.6).

<sup>106</sup> N.J. Admin. Code tit. 10, § 122C-2.7 (2003).

<sup>110</sup> See 12 Colo. Code Regs. § 2509-6 (2003).

<sup>111</sup> See S.B. 01-012, 2001 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Colo. 2001) (codified at Colo. Rev. Stat. § 26-6-106(q)(1)).

childcare or child development for part of the training requirements.<sup>112</sup> Kentucky may exempt licensed foster parents from another state from the initial preparation process, but each applicant's situation must be reviewed to determine that the applicant possesses the necessary skills for fostering, and the records and a recommendation from the other state must be obtained.<sup>113</sup> Arkansas permits waiver of some training requirements for therapeutic foster parents who are "specifically qualified to provide the service because they have an educational or a professional background that attests to qualification equal to or greater than that of care givers who have received special training."<sup>114</sup> Connecticut allows the Commissioner of Children and Families to grant a waiver to a relative from any procedure or standard, except safety standards; such waivers must be reviewed "on a case by case basis."<sup>115</sup>

Guidelines developed for tribal organizations suggest waiving the annual training requirement for foster parents with five consecutive years of experience.<sup>116</sup> This waiver provision, however, is suggested as an option since "years of experience [caring for] 'easy' children doesn't [sic] prepare a parent for one with FAE (Fetal Alcohol

Effect), or SED (Seriously Emotionally Disturbed)."<sup>117</sup>

The federal regulations adopted after the enactment of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 ("ASFA") do not authorize the waiver of foster family home standards, including foster parent training requirements. The Department of Health and Human Services' ("HHS") policy, however, set forth in the *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, states that "in certain situations" or "special situations" the agency may waive some foster home standards or criteria for licensure or approval.<sup>118</sup> The *Manual* does not specify the situations in which waivers are permissible nor does it exempt any particular standards from waiver.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>117</sup> *Id.*

<sup>118</sup> *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, *supra* note 32, § 8.3A.8c.

<sup>119</sup> Comments accompanying the final regulations state that "the safety standards, however, cannot be waived in any circumstance." Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews and Child and Family Services State Plan Reviews, 65 Fed. Reg. 4020, 4033 (Jan. 25, 2000) (codified at 45 C.F.R. pts. 1355-1357).

### Provisional Licenses

In some states, foster parents who have not completed the required training may be permitted to assume care of a child while operating with a provisional or emergency license. The conditions under which such temporary licenses may be granted and their duration vary from state to state. Such homes that do not satisfy all of the state's standards, including training requirements, are not eligible for federal funds. North Carolina, for example, permits persons licensed or seeking a license who are temporarily unable to comply with a licensing rule or rules to be issued a provisional license for a period not to exceed six months.<sup>120</sup> Arizona allows the agency to issue a provisional license to foster parent applicants and those renewing their licenses who, because of "hardship," have not completed the required training; the waiver

<sup>120</sup> N.C. Gen. Stat. § 131D-10.3(f) (2002).

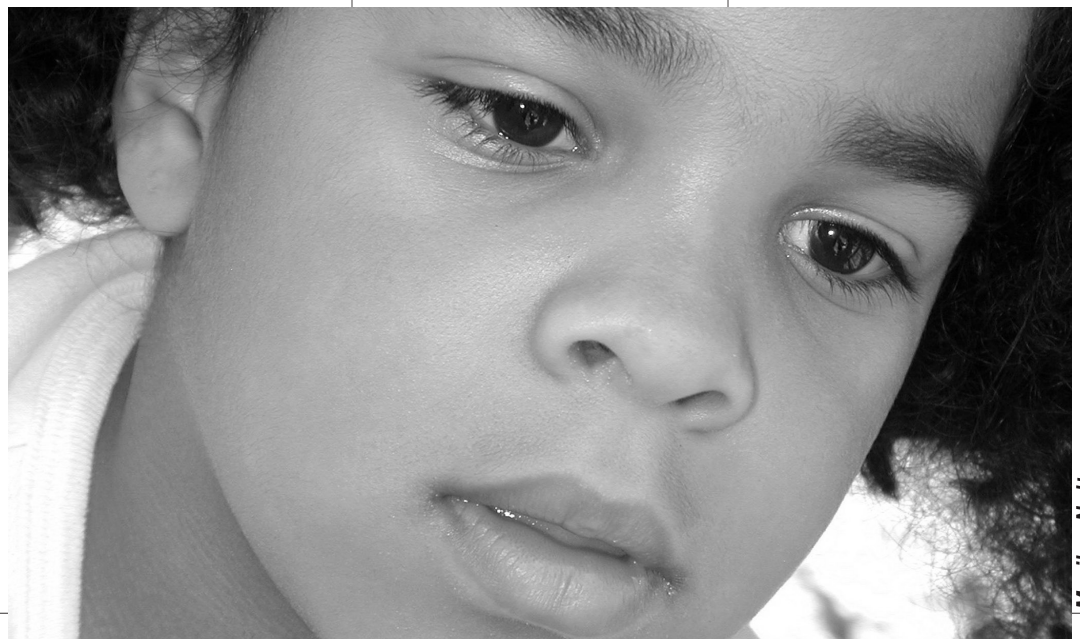
is limited to six months and cannot be extended.<sup>121</sup>

As a condition for receipt of federal funds for its child welfare programs, a state must adopt and maintain standards for foster family homes that are reasonably in accord with recommended standards of national organizations.<sup>122</sup> Professional standards require the completion of pre-service and in-service training as a condition of licensure or approval. Foster family home standards must be applied to every licensed or approved foster family

(continued on p.12)

<sup>121</sup> Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 8-509(D) (2003). Colorado permits a four-month grace period for "emergency placement." Colo. Rev. Stat. § 26-6-106(q)(IV) (2002).

<sup>122</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(10) requires the establishment or designation of a State authority or authorities which shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining standards for foster family homes and child care institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended standards of national organizations concerned with standards for such institutions or homes, including standards related to admission policies, safety, sanitation, and protection of civil rights, and . . . the standards so established shall be applied by the State to any foster family home or child care institution receiving funds under this part or part B of this subchapter.



Marilyn Nolt

<sup>112</sup> Ind. Admin. Code tit. 470, r. 3-1-15.5 (2003).

<sup>113</sup> 922 Ky. Admin. Regs. 1:350, § 8(9) (2002).

<sup>114</sup> Code Ark. R. § 016 06 055 212.100 (2003).

<sup>115</sup> Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17a-114(b) (2003).

<sup>116</sup> See Nat'l Indian Child Welfare Ass'n, *supra* note 98, at 22.

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.11)

## Foster Parent Training

home receiving funds under the title IV-E or title IV-B programs.<sup>123</sup>

Federal regulations adopted after enactment of ASFA established that “[a]nything less than full licensure or approval is insufficient for meeting title IV-E eligibility requirements.”<sup>124</sup> Therefore, “before a State may claim title IV-E funds, it must find that the home meets the State’s licensure standards.”<sup>125</sup> The *Child Welfare Policy Manual* clarifies that, “[r]egardless of the term used to denote full licensure or approval,” the standards used by a state to license or approve its foster homes “must comprise full licensure or approval of the homes, including all applicable safety requirements.”<sup>126</sup> Thus, “[i]f a State maintains certain training requirements as a standard to be met for full licensure, the standard must be applied to all foster family homes licensed or approved by the State.”<sup>127</sup> Stated slightly dif-

ferently, the requirement of full licensure means that, “if a State issues an interim license (provisional, emergency, etc.) pending satisfaction of all licensure standards (e.g., while the State is awaiting the results of a criminal records check or the completion of training), then the State may not claim title IV-E funds on behalf of a child” in that foster family home.<sup>128</sup>

It appears then that a state may use “provisionally licensed” homes for the care of children, as long as it does not claim federal financial participation for that home. Congress and HHS hoped to deter the use of such homes by denying federal funds to offset the cost of care in such homes. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine how widespread the use of provisional licenses remains throughout the states. How many of the states’ foster children are in such homes and the standard(s) from which the foster parents were granted a temporary exemption is also unknown.

### Relatives<sup>129</sup>

Of the approximately 542,000 children in foster care in the country, about 411,000 are in family foster homes or adoptive homes. Approximately 130,000 (24 percent) of those children are living in the

homes of relatives.<sup>130</sup> In California and several other states, the percentage is higher. The most recent data in California indicate that more than one third (35.5 percent) of children in care are living with relatives.<sup>131</sup>

Many states have exempted relatives from foster parent training altogether. Some professional standards also treat related and unrelated caregivers differently.<sup>132</sup> A recent Urban Institute survey found that at least 11 states waive training requirements for relatives as a group—that is, no case-by-case determination is required.<sup>133</sup> In a few of those states, a less rigorous training (e.g., watching a training-related videotape) is substituted for the training required of unrelated foster parents.<sup>134</sup>

Few state statutes draw an explicit distinction between the training required of relatives and non-relatives acting as foster parents. In an

attempt to facilitate prompt placements with suitable relatives “in emergency situations,” Louisiana makes the following allowance:

relatives and friends of the foster child who have applied to be foster parents and who appear to meet the eligibility criteria for such foster homes may be certified by the department for one ninety-day period without such training [required of other foster parent applicants].<sup>135</sup>

Taking into account that relatives of a foster child usually do not provide care for other unrelated children, Louisiana law allows the child welfare department to “establish separate minimum training requirements” for relatives whose homes are “not open to placement of other children.” However, the statute requires that such relatives complete 10 hours of pre-service training.<sup>136</sup>

Hawaii amended its foster parent licensing law in 1999 to allow “specially licensed” and “relative foster home care providers” to care for a child before completing training required of other applicants as long as the relative successfully completes the foster parent training within one year following placement of the first child.<sup>137</sup>

In 2001, California’s legislature enacted A.B. 1695,

123 45 C.F.R. § 1355.34(c)(7) (2003); Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews and Child and Family Services State Plan Reviews, 65 Fed. Reg. 4020, 4072 (Jan. 25, 2000) (codified at 45 C.F.R. pts. 1355-1357).

124 45 C.F.R. § 1355.20(a).

125 Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews and Child and Family Services State Plan Reviews, 65 Fed. Reg. at 4033.

126 Child Welfare Policy Manual, *supra* note 32, § 8.3A.8c.

127 *Id.*

128 Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews and Child and Family Services State Plan Reviews, 65 Fed. Reg. at 4033.

129 For fact sheets providing an overview of kinship care for each state, see Casey Family Programs Nat’l Ctr. for Res. Family Support, Kinship Care State Fact Sheets, [http://www.casey.org/cnc/state\\_contacts/kinship\\_fact\\_sheets.htm](http://www.casey.org/cnc/state_contacts/kinship_fact_sheets.htm) (last visited July 25, 2003).

130 Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., The AFCARS Report: Preliminary FY 2001 Estimates as of March 2003 (8) (providing figures based on children in foster care on September 30, 2001), <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/afcars/report8.htm> (last updated Mar. 28, 2003).

131 See Ctr. for Soc. Servs. Research, Univ. of Cal. at Berkeley, Children in Child Welfare Supervised Foster Care by Placement Type and Age as of January 1, 2003 (2003), [http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/Pointintime/fostercare/childwel/data/CWF\\_PAO\\_jan2003\\_0.html](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/CWSCMSreports/Pointintime/fostercare/childwel/data/CWF_PAO_jan2003_0.html) (last visited July 29, 2003).

132 See, e.g., COA Standards and Self-Study Manual, *supra* note 58, § S21.9.01 (requiring that agency policy or procedure specifically delineate the amount of pre-service and in-service education for foster parents and the amount of in-service education for formal kinship caregivers).

133 Amy Jantz et al., Urban Inst., The Continuing Evolution of State Kinship Care Policies 12 (2002).

134 *Id.*

135 La. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 46:283(c)(2)(a) (West 2003).

136 *Id.* § 46:283(c)(2)(d).

137 Haw. Rev. Stat. § 346-17(c) (2003).  
138 A.B. 1695, 2001 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2001) (codified at Cal. Health & Safety Code § 1505(l)).

exempting relatives caring for children placed by the juvenile court from foster family home licensing.<sup>138</sup> At the same time the legislature mandated that

the standards used to evaluate and grant or deny approval of the home of the relative . . . shall be the same standards set forth in regulations for the licensing of foster family homes which prescribe standards of safety and sanitation for the physical plant and standards for basic personal care, supervision, and services provided by the caregiver.<sup>139</sup>

However, the settlement of a lawsuit brought to enforce this section and to ensure California's compliance with the federal requirement that relative homes meet the same standards as other foster homes provides that relatives are exempt from both pre-service and in-service train-

*Unlike with non-kin, many child welfare agencies do not require kinship caregivers to complete any formal training to be a foster parent.*<sup>140</sup>

ing required of unrelated foster parents.<sup>141</sup> Relatives are merely required to attend an orientation provided by the county and must be given

<sup>139</sup> Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code § 309(d)(2) (Deering 2003).

<sup>140</sup> Rob Geen, Urban Inst., Foster Children Placed with Relatives Often Receive Less Government Help 4 (2003).

<sup>141</sup> Settlement Agreement and Order at 3, Higgins v. Saenz, No. CPF-02-501937 (Cal. Super. Ct. Oct. 31, 2002).

a summary of State approval regulations for foster family homes.<sup>142</sup> This exemption of relatives from the usual training required of other foster parents both before and after approval appears to conflict with federal law.<sup>143</sup>

State regulations, unlike many state statutes, often do specify different training requirements for relatives. Oklahoma, for example, requires kinship foster parents to complete training, if possible, before the child is placed. A three-month grace period is permitted.<sup>144</sup> Federal law now requires that relatives caring for foster children placed by the agency must be held to the same standards as non-relatives. This requirement is clarified in regulation<sup>145</sup> and in policy. In response to agency inquiries, the federal *Child Welfare Policy Manual* provides elaboration:

**Question:** What is an example of a two-tiered system of licens-

ing, and how does that apply to foster families?

**Answer:** A two-tiered system

of licensing is one in

<sup>142</sup> *Id.* attachment A ("Approval of Family Caregiver Home Form"). California's exemption from training applies not only to relatives but to another category of caregivers—"nonrelative extended family members," defined as "any adult caregiver who has an established familial or mentoring relationship with the child." Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code § 362.7.

<sup>143</sup> See 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(24) (2003); see also *infra* note 146.

<sup>144</sup> Okla. Admin. Code § 377:10-7.7 (2000).

<sup>145</sup> See 45 C.F.R. § 1355.20 (2003).

which different licensing standards are applied to different groups of foster family homes. For example, different standards for related foster family homes and non-related foster family homes, as well as for "provisional" foster family homes that have not yet met all required standards for full licensure, are two-tiered systems. If a State maintains certain training requirements as a standard to be met for full licensure, the standard must be applied to all foster family homes licensed or approved by the State.<sup>146</sup>

Waivers of certain licensing requirements are permissible under federal law but must be reviewed and granted on an individual basis. Again, the federal *Child Welfare Policy Manual* provides some clarification:

**Question:** Can the State waive some foster home standards or criteria for licensure or approval of relative foster homes?

**Answer:** Yes, in certain situations. In order to meet the requirements of section 471 (a)(10) of the Social Security Act, the State licensing authority must be responsible for establishing standards for foster family

<sup>146</sup> Child Welfare Policy Manual, *supra* note 32, § 8.3A.8c.

homes and child care institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended standards of national organizations.

However, special situations may arise where there are grounds for waiving a requirement for an individual relative/foster parent on behalf of a foster child. For example, a relative's dwelling may contain 10% less square feet than necessary to meet normal licensing standards. In these exceptional circumstances, the reason for the waiver must be documented in the licensing/approval record for the foster home and the certification of licensure/approval must indicate its applicability only to the specific relative child.

All foster care licensing standards should provide equal protection in terms of safety, sanitation, civil rights, and admission policies (where applicable) for all children in care, regardless of their special situations. Children living in the homes of relatives are entitled to no less protection than children living in non-relative foster homes.<sup>147</sup>

Amendments to the federal law during the last few years may have contributed to the confusion about the standards to be applied to relatives acting as foster par-

*(continued on p.14)*

<sup>147</sup> *Id.* This section of the Child Welfare Policy Manual fails to mention the more recently enacted federal mandate for foster parent training that allows no exceptions and the explicit prohibition on placing a child before such preparation is completed. See 42 U.S.C. 671(a)(24)

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.13)

## Foster Parent Training

ents. In 1996 federal law was amended to require that

the State shall consider giving preference to an adult relative over a non-related caregiver when determining a placement for a child, provided that the relative caregiver meets all relevant State child protection standards.<sup>148</sup>

This language appears to require only that the relative meet “child protection

148 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-193, § 505(3), 110 Stat. 2105, 2278 (codified at 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(19)). A similar preference is found in the Indian Child Welfare Act:

*It must be remembered that the well-being of foster parents is directly related to the well-being of the children in their care.*

*Lois Urquhart, Separation and Loss: Assessing the Impacts on Foster Parent Retention, 6 Child & Adolescent Soc. Work J. 193, 207 (1989).*

In any foster care or preadoptive placement, a preference shall be given, in the absence of good cause to the contrary, to a placement with:

- (i) a member of the Indian child's extended family;
- (ii) a foster home licensed, approved, or specified by the Indian child's tribe;
- (iii) an Indian foster home licensed or approved by an authorized non-Indian licensing authority; or
- (iv) an institution for children approved by an Indian tribe or operated by an Indian organization which has a program suitable to meet the Indian child's needs.

25 U.S.C. § 1915(b) (2003).

standards” and not the more rigorous foster family licensing standards in order for the state to place the child in the home. Subsequent amendments from the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, however, emphasize the necessity for all foster care placements—whether through public or private agencies—to meet standards ensuring quality services and protection of the child's health and safety.<sup>149</sup> With the enactment of the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act in 1999, foster parent training requirements were made more explicit, mandating that

before a child in foster care under the responsibility of the State is placed with prospective foster parents, the prospective foster parents will be prepared adequately with the appropriate knowledge and skills to provide for the needs of the child, and that such preparation will be

continued, as necessary, after the placement of the child.<sup>150</sup>

Whatever ambiguity may have existed

149 Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-89, § 308, 111 Stat. 2115, 2133 (codified at 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(22)) (providing that “not later than January 1, 1999, the State shall develop and implement standards to ensure that children in foster care placements in public or private agencies are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children”).  
150 42 U.S.C. § 671(a)(24).

earlier has been clarified by these later amendments and by the *Child Welfare Policy Manual*.<sup>151</sup>

Despite this clarification, it appears that states are not complying with the federal mandate. South Carolina's recent policy revision is an exception. Regulations effective March 2003 provide:

Per federal policy, relatives being licensed must be licensed in accordance with the same requirements as non-relative applicants. SCDSS may waive, on a case by case basis, for relatives or non-relatives, non-safety elements as SCDSS deems appropriate.<sup>152</sup>

Much of the policy behind kinship placements assumes that the relative with whom the child is placed has known or cared for the child before he or she entered foster care. We are aware of no data to support this assumption. Even if true, however, relatives and the children placed in their homes could benefit

151 Some ambiguity may still remain. Citing current policy, set forth in ACYF-PIQ-85-11, the comments to the 2000 regulations note that “there may be exceptional circumstances” involving relative caregivers that warrant a waiver of a licensing requirement. The comments go on to state that “[t]his waiver authority does not extend to all foster homes but only to relative homes in certain circumstances delineated in ACYF-PIQ-85-11.” Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Reviews and Child and Family Services State Plan Reviews, 65 Fed. Reg. 4020, 4034 (Jan. 25, 2000) (codified at 45 C.F.R. pts. 1355-1357). However, certain parts of ACYF-PIQ-85-11 were withdrawn by the Department of Health and Human Services on September 24, 2001.  
152 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 114-550(L) (2003).

from training.<sup>153</sup>

### Identifying Training Needs

Most pre-licensing knowledge and skill areas included in the prevailing curricula were jointly developed with input from caregivers and other child welfare professionals. Given the similarities between the major pre-service training programs—MAPP, PRIDE, and IHS—there seems to be agreement among many agencies and caregivers about the topics to be included in initial preparation of foster parents.

Foster parents interviewed as part of the CFS Reviews identified two major areas of unmet need for in-service training. Many believed that additional training on cultural sensitivity and competency should be provided.<sup>154</sup> An even larger number of stakeholders told reviewers that training for special needs children (e.g., children whose behavior required special skills, older youth in

153 See Geen, *supra* note 135, at 4-5 (“However, it seems obvious that kin could use training in a variety of areas related to service delivery, including what services are available from the child welfare agency, other public services kin may be eligible for and how to apply, and services available from community agencies.”); see also Gary S. Cuddeback & John G. Orme, *Training and Services for Kinship and Nonkinship Foster Families*, 81 Child Welfare 879 (2002) (analyzing data from 1991 national foster parent survey and documenting kinship caregivers' need for training in multiple areas).

154 See Alaska Final Report, *supra* note 22, at 71; Colorado Final Report, *supra* note 22, at 61; Minnesota Final Report, *supra* note 8, at 43; New York Final Report, *supra* note 30, at 76; North Dakota Final Report, *supra* note 11, at 43; Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., South Dakota: Findings of the Child and Family Services Review 43 (2002) [hereinafter South Dakota Final Report].

care) was sorely needed.<sup>155</sup> Some also reported the need for training to better equip them as advocates for their foster children in the educational system.<sup>156</sup>

How agencies determine what subjects to cover in in-service trainings offered to foster parents varies from state to state. In California, where training is provided through the community college system, a state advisory committee assists the Chancellor's Office of Foster and Kinship Care Education. Its 32 members include foster youth, foster parent and kinship association representatives, state and local department of social services administrators and staff, and community organization representatives.<sup>157</sup> Each community college involved in the program also is required to have a local advisory panel. State and/or local foster parent associations and the department of social services also must be consulted to assist in identifying subjects and skills to be

155 See Colorado Final Report, *supra* note 22, at 61; Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Final Report—Georgia 49 (2001) [hereinafter Georgia Final Report]; Kansas Final Report, *supra* note 14, at 58; Massachusetts Final Report, *supra* note 15, at 43; Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., New Mexico Child and Family Services Review: Final Report 63 (2002); Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Final Assessment—North Carolina 48 (2001) [hereinafter North Carolina Final Report]; Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: Summary of Findings—Texas 61 (2002); Vermont Final Report, *supra* note 22, at F-47.

156 See Alabama Final Report, *supra* note 25, at 52; Alaska Final Report, *supra* note 22, at 52-53; South Dakota Final Report, *supra* note 154, at 43.

157 California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, *supra* note 20, at 26.

addressed in the training.<sup>158</sup>

In some other states, agency case managers decide what they think foster parents want. Often these topics do not match what foster parent themselves identify as training needs.<sup>159</sup>

In Tennessee, training-needs assessments are being conducted in each of the state's 12 regions. Recruitment personnel, agency staff, public agency foster parents, and staff and foster parents of private contract agencies meet to identify and prioritize training needs. The meetings are facilitated by University of Tennessee staff, who have a contract with the state agency to provide foster parent training.<sup>160</sup>

Surveys of current foster parents are another way in which training needs are identified. These surveys are conducted either by the foster parent association or the state or local agency. They may be mailed out or distributed at annual conferences. In Washington, every few years, the Foster Parents Association of Washington State (FPAWS) conducts training-interest surveys of its members/foster par-

158 The California State Foster Parents Association (or the local chapters thereof) and the California Department of Social Services shall identify training participants and shall advise the chancellor on the form, content, and methodology of the training program. Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code § 903.7(c)(4) (Deering 2003).

159 E-mail from Karen Jorgenson, Administrator, National Foster Parent Association to Amy Chen, National Center for Youth Law (Apr. 23, 2003) (on file with author).

160 E-mail from Betty Hastings, President, Tennessee Foster Parent Association to Amy Chen, Nat'l Center for Youth Law (Apr. 23, 2003) (on file with author).

ents.<sup>161</sup> FPAWS' surveys list several broad areas—behavior, health care concerns, legal issues, cultural issues, working with birth parents, sexuality—and, underneath each topic, list several more specific issues. Foster parents are asked to rank the topics according to their own needs. For the last several years, help in managing behavior and other treatment issues, such as mental health, including childhood depression, has been at the top of the list.<sup>162</sup> Similar results were obtained in a mail survey of foster parents in Michigan,<sup>163</sup> a survey of Arkansas foster parents,<sup>164</sup> and CFS Reviews stakeholder interviews.<sup>165</sup> When Arkansas foster parents were asked, "What are your three greatest training needs?" the areas most frequently listed included learning how to care for an emotionally disturbed child, caring for a sexually abused child, and

161 FPAWS has foster parent liaisons in each area of the state whose work with foster parents also helps to identify training needs.

162 Foster Parents Ass'n of Wash. State, Training Interest Survey (1995); Foster Parents Ass'n of Wash. State, Training Interest Survey (1999). More recent surveys in two of the state's regions confirm the results of these earlier surveys. See Larry Stephenson, Foster Parents Ass'n of Wash. State, Training Needs Survey: A Report on the Survey of Foster Parents in Region 1 (2002); Larry Stephenson, Foster Parents Ass'n of Wash. State, Training Needs: A Survey of the Needs of Foster Parents in Region 2 (2002).

163 See Michigan Final Report, *supra* note 7, at 79.

164 Ctr. for the Study of Soc. Policy, Arkansas Foster Parent Survey Analysis for the Division of Child and Family Services of the Arkansas Department of Human Services 46-51 (2002).

165 See Massachusetts Final Report, *supra* note 15, at 43 (reporting stakeholders' comments that additional training is needed on handling difficult behaviors and accessing services from DSS and other systems); Michigan Final Report, *supra* note, at 79-80 (identifying training needs in the areas of children's mental health, sexual abuse, grief/loss issues, accessing services, and coping with children's behavior).

understanding and managing difficult behaviors.<sup>166</sup>

The extent to which the results of these surveys and other methods of gathering suggestions from foster parents actually shape the training curriculum varies. Several years ago, foster parents in Alameda County, California, expressed frustration over the lack of information they received about how the child welfare system works and what to expect in court hearings.<sup>167</sup> There is no indication that their suggestions were implemented. On the other hand, Oklahoma officials responded to a recent survey of foster parents by adding 11 new topics to in-service trainings being offered.<sup>168</sup>

In planning a training agenda, it would seem critical to consider the needs of the children foster parents are being asked to care for in their homes. While many child welfare administrators report increasingly severe problems among children entering care, little is being done to collect accurate data identifying the frequency and nature of disabilities and chronic conditions among state foster care populations. AFCARS data are likely unreliable in this area, too.<sup>169</sup> As a result, planning is a kind of hit-or-miss endeavor.

(continued on p.16)

166 Ctr. for the Study of Soc. Policy, *supra* note 164 at 46-51 (2002).

167 Pamela Choice et al., *supra* note 27, at 37-39.

168 Oklahoma Final Report, *supra* note 30, at 71.

169 See *infra* note 318.

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.15)

## Foster Parent Training

### The Trainers

A lack of experience and consistency among trainers can interfere with the effectiveness of the training.<sup>170</sup> Consequently, both the Child Welfare Institute (CWI) and CWLA provide training for trainers using their programs.

CWI has rigid requirements for the people it authorizes to conduct training using its MAPP materials. MAPP publications are available only to licensed users. MAPP

another leader conducting training, and co-train with staff before being eligible for certification. CWI sponsors an annual meeting for all of its approved trainers during which it provides continuing training and solicits feedback from those using the curriculum.<sup>171</sup>

CWLA trains trainers under contracts with public and private agencies. It first trains a core group of agency staff who, upon return to their agencies, go on to gain experience conducting sessions with several groups of families. Those who demonstrate the most skill in these sessions are identified as candidates for becoming a “master trainer.” Utilizing a CWLA-developed process of additional training and consultation, agencies then select master trainers. Master trainers train other staff at

the agency, thus maintaining some control over the quality and consistency of trainers. The agencies, with tools and procedures provided by CWLA, monitor the performance of their master trainers. With this model, agencies develop the internal capacity to prepare new trainers and avoid the high costs that come with having to go to an outside organization each time they need to develop a

new cadre of trainers.<sup>172</sup>

Each of these programs encourages the use of an experienced foster parent as a co-trainer. Adding this person to the team provides legitimacy, experience, reality, and insight that the other trainer may not have. However, as one experienced trainer told us, you can have a really great foster parent who is not a very good teacher.<sup>173</sup> Co-trainers must be carefully selected and must not just provide “window dressing.”

In several states (e.g., California and Iowa) foster parent training is provided primarily through local community colleges. In New Hampshire and Tennessee, the state universities contract to provide training.<sup>174</sup> The College for Lifelong Learning at the University of New Hampshire developed its own pre-service curriculum—Foundations for Fostering. There are seven modules in the New Hampshire training curriculum, some of which are similar to topics covered in the other major pre-service curricula. More than 80 percent of the 80 instructors in the New Hampshire program

are foster and/or adoptive parents.<sup>175</sup>

Some states have contracted out recruitment and training of foster and adoptive parents to private agencies.<sup>176</sup> Pre-service training in Hawaii is provided by Hawaii Behavioral Health, an independent for-profit agency, under contract with Hawaii’s Department of Human Services. In the District of Columbia, a consortium of child welfare agencies has provided training since the early 1990s. In Kansas, where all foster care services are contracted out, “the highest satisfaction under privatization compared to before privatization was with foster parent training.”<sup>177</sup> Elsewhere, foster parent associations sponsor or provide training, sometimes under contract with the public agency.<sup>178</sup>

### Funding of Training

States draw upon multiple sources to fund foster parent training. Most use local and/or state dollars as a match for

*[C]hildren in kinship care and their kinship caregivers have a need for services equal to and like their counterparts in family foster care. A full range of services and supports should be available from the community and the child welfare agency.*

Amy L. Gordon et al., *A First Look at the Need for Enhanced Support Services for Kinship Caregivers*, 82 *Child Welfare* 77, 94 (2003)

trainers must be certified. Certification is conducted by CWI staff and requires completion of seven to eight days of training. MAPP trainers must participate in a MAPP/GPS group, observe

<sup>170</sup> North Carolina Final Report, *supra* note 155, at 47 (“As the delivery of this training occurs by staff at the local level, the frequency and effectiveness of the training across the state is somewhat inconsistent.”).

<sup>171</sup> Telephone Interview by Amy Chen with Tom Morton, President, Child Welfare Institute (Apr. 17, 2003).

<sup>172</sup> E-mail from Maureen Leighton, Associate Director, Walker Treischman National Center for Professional Development, to Amy Chen, Intern, National Center for Youth Law (June 11, 2003) (on file with author).

<sup>173</sup> Telephone interview by Amy Chen with Barbara Wright, Former President, Hawaii Foster Parent Association (May 14, 2003)

<sup>174</sup> See *Foster Parent Training Program Reports Strong Year*, Dover Community News, Jan. 24, 2003, [http://www.seacoastonline.com/news/dover/d1\\_24g.htm](http://www.seacoastonline.com/news/dover/d1_24g.htm); E-mail from Betty Hastings, President, Tennessee Foster Parent Association to Amy Chen, Nat’l Center for Youth Law (Apr. 23, 2003) (on file with author)

<sup>175</sup> *Foster Parent Training Program Reports Strong Year*, *supra* note 174.

<sup>176</sup> Roseana Bess et al., *Urban Inst., The Cost of Protecting Vulnerable Children III: What Factors Affect States’ Fiscal Decisions?* 26 (2002); see also Office of Legislative Auditor Gen., State of Utah, Report No. 2002-04: A Performance Audit of the Utah Foster Care Foundation 11-14 (2002).

<sup>177</sup> Larry D. Friesen, *Privatized Child Welfare Services: Foster Parents’ Perspectives*, 80 *Child Welfare* 309, 318 (2001).

<sup>178</sup> In Michigan, for example, the agency has contracts with the Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association “to provide foster parent training (using the PRIDE curriculum), mentoring, foster home support, and communication services.” Michigan Final Report, *supra* note 7, at 79. In Texas, the agency provides Title IV-B funds to the Texas State Foster Parents, Inc., to meet the in-service needs of foster parents. Tex. Dep’t of Protective & Regulatory Servs., *Texas Child and Family Services Review Statewide Assessment 49* (2001) [hereinafter *Texas Statewide Assessment*].

federal funds available under Title IV-E. In 2000, states reported spending \$149 million on staff and foster parent training.<sup>179</sup> Agency administrators also reported an increase in spending on foster parent training between 1998 and 2000.<sup>180</sup>

Federal financial participation for foster parent training costs was initially limited to costs of travel and per diem, matched at 50 percent.<sup>181</sup> Amendments to the federal law in 1989 temporarily authorized states to receive reimbursement for training of current or prospective foster and adoptive parents at a 75 percent match; the limitation to travel and per diem costs also was eliminated.<sup>182</sup> In 1993, the 75 percent match rate was made permanent.<sup>183</sup>

Federal funds also are available to pay the salaries, travel, and per diem of state or local agency staff conducting training of foster parents.<sup>184</sup> States may obtain federal matching funds for other costs related to training (e.g., costs of space, purchase or

development of training materials, costs of experts to develop or conduct training).<sup>185</sup> States that contract out training to community colleges or private agencies may also claim federal funds.<sup>186</sup>

As noted earlier, the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act (Chafee Act) requires training for foster parents directed at assisting older youth in their homes to prepare for independence.<sup>187</sup> Given this mandate, some states questioned whether funds appropriated under the Chafee Act might be used for foster parent training.<sup>188</sup> Recent revisions in the *Child Welfare Policy Manual* make clear that Chafee Act funds cannot be diverted to fund foster parent training for that or other purposes.<sup>189</sup>

Foster parent training is not immune from the budget crises facing many states.<sup>190</sup> In January of this year California Governor Davis suggested more than \$7.5 million in cuts in the foster parent training budget.<sup>191</sup> Connecticut reports that fiscal constraints have limited its agency's ability to schedule some training events.<sup>192</sup> In

September 2002, Wisconsin's county departments of social services were notified that all state General Purpose Revenue for foster parent training was removed from the budget.<sup>193</sup> Stakeholders in Nebraska reported that "there are not sufficient ongoing training opportunities and that the State has told foster parents that due to budget cuts, in-service training availability will be reduced."<sup>194</sup>

### Types of Training

Agencies employ or permit a variety of training methods to be used in preparing and supporting foster parents. Classroom group instruction, along with videos, books, and other individual, self-guided instruction, are utilized. Little research exists on the relative effectiveness of these different types of training.<sup>195</sup>

Newly adopted regulations in Iowa specify the types of acceptable training methods and require that at least three of the six hours of annual in-service training be group training.<sup>196</sup>

Minnesota encourages the use of a variety of settings and methods for foster parent training.<sup>197</sup> Kentucky requires that resource family preparation "shall be completed in a group setting."<sup>198</sup> Mississippi makes "home-based training modules" available to foster parents but limits home study to no more than four clock hours of the required 12 hours of in-service training.<sup>199</sup>

Illinois regulations specify the types of training foster parents may use to satisfy the in-service requirements.<sup>200</sup> They include foster parent conferences approved by the department, training under the auspices of an accredited child welfare agency, a module of the Foster PRIDE curriculum, and materials borrowed from the department's lending libraries. Oregon allows foster parents to read a book or watch a movie relating to foster care or listen to "an applicable audiotape while driving to work" to obtain training credit.<sup>201</sup> There is a preference that at least half of the 10 hours of annual training

(continued on p. 18)

179 Bess et al., *supra* note 176, at 9. This figure does not include other federal funds (e.g., Social Services Block Grant) that states may have used for training costs.

180 *Id.* at 4.

181 U.S. Gen. Accounting Office, Foster Parents: Recruiting and Preservice Training Practices Need Evaluation 18 (1989).

182 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1989, Pub. L. No. 101-239, § 8006(a), 103 Stat. 2106, 24612-62.

183 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-66, §13715, 107 Stat. 312, 657 (codified at 42 U.S.C. § 674(a)(3)(B)); 45 C.E.R. § 1356.60(b)(1) (2003); see Admin. for Children & Families, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Re-Establishment of Authority to Claim 75 Percent Match for Certain Categories of Short-Term Training Expenditures Under the Title IV-E Program, Program Instruction ACYF-PI-94-15 (Aug. 8, 1994).

184 Child Welfare Policy Manual, *supra* note 32, § 8.1H.

185 *Id.*

186 Child Welfare Policy Manual, *supra* note 32, §§ 8.1 E & H.

187 See *supra* note 39 and accompanying text.

188 Child Welfare Policy Manual, *supra* note 32, § 3.1H.

189 See *id.*

190 See Nebraska Final Report, *supra* note 5, at 68.

191 Fact Sheet, Foster & Kinship Care Educ. Program, Cal. Cmty. Colls. Chancellor's Office, January 10th Governor's Proposal to Eliminate State Foster Children & Parent Training Funds & Reduce Proposition 98 Funds: Impact of Proposed Cuts on Training Available to Caregivers of Foster Children/Youth (Jan. 7, 2003) (on file with author).

192 Connecticut Final Report, *supra* note 16, at 68.

193 Memorandum from Susan N. Dreyfus, Administrator, Division of Children and Family Services, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, to Area Administrators et al. (Sept. 18, 2002) (addressing foster parent pre-service training and federal Title IV-E reimbursement), [http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/dcfs\\_info/num\\_memos/2002/2002-12.htm](http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/dcfs_info/num_memos/2002/2002-12.htm).

194 Nebraska Final Report, *supra* note 5, at 68.

195 For two studies providing such a comparison, see R.B. Hampson et al., *Individual vs. Group Training for Foster Parents: Efficiency/Effectiveness Evaluations*, 32 Fam. Rel. 191 (1983); Robert B. Hampson & Joseph B. Tavormina, *Relative Effectiveness of Behavioral and Reflective Group Training with Foster Mothers*, 48 J. Consulting & Clinical Psychol. 294 (1980).

196 See Iowa Admin. Code r. 441-117.7(b), 441-113.8(3)(a) (2003).

197 See Minn. R. 9545.0150 (2003):

For example: group sessions offered by local agencies or foster parent associations; regular courses offered by technical colleges, colleges, or universities; TV or correspondence courses; agricultural extension classes; organizational activities such as conferences, conventions, and seminars; special sessions offered by local school districts or mental health centers; Red Cross training; one to one tutoring by agency staff or experienced foster parents.

198 922 Ky. Admin. Regs. 1:350, § 8(2) (2002).

199 Code Miss. R. § 11-111-001 (2003).

200 See Ill. Admin. Code tit. 89, § 402.2 (2003).

201 Or. Dep't of Human Servs., Foster Parent Handbook, at V-1, <http://www.scf.hr.state.or.us/foster/FPHdbk/> (last visited July 27, 2003).

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.17)

## Foster Parent Training

are interactive. Interactive training is broadly defined to include “[c]onsulting with your child’s doctor” and “[p]articipating in your child’s therapy sessions, CRB [citizen review board] or court hearings.”<sup>202</sup> Iowa regulations specify that written materials, movies, or videotapes are acceptable methods of training, but they award different credit hours for different types of training.<sup>203</sup>

Over the last several years, technology has had an impact on the types of training, methods, and resources available for foster parent

tionnaires are available.<sup>204</sup> Some of these materials address topics on which many foster parents express a need for further information and advice.<sup>205</sup> In-service training requirements may often be satisfied at least in part by reading books, articles, or watching videos. The length of the book or video determines the number of hours of training credit the foster parent may receive.<sup>206</sup>

Not all people agree that self-study “trainings” are effective or should replace other methods.<sup>207</sup> South Carolina regulations provide that “viewing standard television programs or reading popular news or magazine articles will not be accepted for training

204 The usefulness of videos used with small groups of foster parents or for continuing education at home has been the subject of two unpublished evaluations suggesting that they do help foster parents to adopt new problem-solving approaches and produce reductions in child problem behaviors over time. See Caesar Pacifici, Foster Parent Training: Managing Child Behavior Problems: Phase I Final Report (unpublished manuscript), <http://www.northwestmedia.com/research/fpbeh-i.pdf>; Caesar Pacifici, Foster Parent Training: Problem-Solving Strategies: Phase I Final Report (unpublished manuscript), <http://www.northwestmedia.com/research/fptv-i.pdf>.

205 See, e.g., Caesar Pacifici et al., Off Road Parenting: Practical Solutions for Difficult Behavior (book and interactive DVD), <http://www.northwestmedia.com/foster/extremeforroad.html>; Videotape: Managing Sexual Acting Out Behavior, <http://www.northwestmedia.com/foster/safe-env.html>; Videotape: Understanding and Dealing with Anger, <http://www.northwestmedia.com/foster/safe-env.html>.

206 See, e.g., Iowa Admin. Code r. 441-117.7.

207 See Alaska Final Report, *supra* note 22, at 70. Stakeholders expressed concerns that “[s]elf-study training is not the most appropriate or effective way to train Native Alaska foster homes” and that “[s]ome foster parents do not perceive the self-study training as effective.” *Id.*

hours.”<sup>208</sup> Vermont’s *Social Services Policy Manual* mandates that individual training and viewing of videotaped sessions “are not acceptable substitutes for attending [pre-service] training sessions.”<sup>209</sup>

Tom Morton, president of the Child Welfare Institute (which produces the MAPP training curriculum), fears that distance training is insufficient to meet the needs of foster parents. “If the whole task is to learn and remember content, it works well,” said Morton. “[This type of training] can work for computer skills, because you can practice computer skills online. But a lot of what’s required here is coaching and development, and the downside of distance-learning technology is the inability to observe people doing things and give them feedback to get better performance. Only about 13 percent of communication is verbal, so there’s a lot of important nonverbal communication that is being missed.”<sup>210</sup>

Group trainings also provide a forum in which supportive relationships may develop and continue after the formal

training is concluded.<sup>211</sup> More than two decades ago, Hampson and Tavormina, based upon their interviews with foster mothers, recommended preparation of foster parents using “a multi-session group format.”<sup>212</sup> Among other things, they found that foster mothers and fathers “called upon other parents they had met in their training group to obtain assistance in specific problems that they had with their foster children.”<sup>213</sup>

In many states, training opportunities and schedules are posted on the Internet at either the foster parent association’s or agency’s Web site.<sup>214</sup> Foster parents can also use the Internet to enter chat rooms to discuss problems with other foster parents as far away as Australia or post questions on message boards.<sup>215</sup>

Informal support groups, like those in San Diego that meet once a month in a fos-

211 Pamela Choice et al., *supra* note 27, at 37 (“Many foster parents also mentioned that interacting with other prospective foster parents helped them develop partnerships and support networks with others who would also soon become foster parents.”); John B. Cook & Jane M. Fletcher, Identifying the Roots of Successful Placements: An Evaluation of a Title IVE Foster Parent Training Program 5 (2002) (unpublished manuscript, on file with the National Center for Youth Law).

212 Robert B. Hampson & Joseph B. Tavormina, Feedback from the Experts: A Study of Foster Mothers, 25 Soc. Work 108, 112 (1980).

213 *Id.*

214 See e.g., Colo. State Foster Parent Ass’n, Training Calendar (providing date, location, and brief description of training classes, organized by month), [http://www.csfa.org/training\\_calendar.htm](http://www.csfa.org/training_calendar.htm) (last updated Apr. 14, 2003); Md. League of Foster & Adoptive Parents, Training Schedule (listing, by county, courses offered by the Maryland Foster Parent Training Center), <http://www.mlfap.org/training.php3>.

215 The confidentiality issues raised by these Internet exchanges have not been explored.

[T]he universal training of foster parents may be one of the least expensive ways to meet the growing challenge of providing good care to those children who need foster-home placement.

Lawrence H. Boyd, Jr. & Linda L. Remy,  
*Is Foster-Parent Training Worthwhile?*,  
52 Soc. Service Rev. 275, 294 (1978).

training. An increasing number of videos, DVDs, Web-based materials, on-line training courses, and ques-

202 *Id.*

203 Iowa Admin. Code r. 441-117.7 (2003).

208 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 114-550(G)(5)(b) (2003).

209 Vt. Dep’t of Soc. & Rehab. Servs., Social Services Policy Manual, No. 93 (1999). This policy appears to be superseded as of June 12, 2003. Under the new policy, “[i]ndividual training sessions can be acceptable substitutes for attending training sessions at the discretion of the Resource Coordinator.” Vt. Dep’t of Soc. & Rehab. Servs., Social Services Policy Manual, No. 93 (June 12, 2003) (draft).

210 Telephone Interview by Amy Chen with Tom Morton, President, Child Welfare Institute (Apr. 17, 2003).

ter parent's home, provide another type of training and often are a source of useful information and encourage discussions that continue beyond the meeting.<sup>216</sup>

### Purposes of Training

The two major pre-service training programs have a dual purpose. Both the MAPP and PRIDE programs are meant to prepare applicants with the knowledge and skills needed to care for foster children. They also incorporate a screening process for foster parent applicants into their sessions, helping prospective parents decide if they want to pursue a license and helping the trainers to determine which applicants should go on to be approved as foster care providers.<sup>217</sup>

Other basic goals of training include (1) to inform foster parents about agency policy on confidentiality, reimbursement, and discipline; (2) to educate foster parents about the children likely to be placed in their homes; (3) to develop and/or improve foster parents' skills in caring for children, thereby improving the capacities of foster parents and reducing the number of placements for children;<sup>218</sup> (4) to reduce the possibility of

216 See, e.g., Foster & Kinship Care Educ. Program, Grossmont Coll., Foster Parent Support Group Roster, <http://www.fakce.org/roster.html> (last visited July 27, 2003).

217 Seeking to add to the body of knowledge on foster parent selection, the University of Tennessee, in collaboration with Casey Family Programs, is pilot-testing a tool to evaluate family foster care applicants' potential success. See Casey Family Programs, The Foster Family Assessment Project, <http://www.casey.org/research/ffa/index.htm> (last visited July 27, 2003).

218 See Boyd & Remy, *supra* note 90, at 290-92.

abuse and neglect in the foster home;<sup>219</sup> (5) to improve foster parent retention;<sup>220</sup> and (6) to help sensitize the applicant to understand the feelings and reactions of children who have experienced abuse or neglect.<sup>221</sup>

Training may promote the identification of children's needs by their caregivers and access to services to meet those needs. A study of children in foster care in Los Angeles found that foster parents with higher educational levels were more likely to refer children for mental health services. The authors suggested that foster parent training might help "to improve the caregiver's sensitivity in detecting a problem and perceiving a need for specialty mental health needs."<sup>222</sup> Training may also encourage and enlist foster parents to facilitate reunification with natural parents.<sup>223</sup>

219 Okla. Admin. Code § 340:75-7-14 (2000).

220 *Id.*; see also Wash. Rev. Code § 74.13.250(1) (2003) ("Preservice training is recognized as a valuable tool to reduce placement disruptions, the length of time children are in care, and foster parent turnover rates. Preservice training also assists potential foster parents in making their final decisions about foster parenting and assists social service agencies in obtaining information about whether to approve potential foster parents."); Lawrence H. Boyd, Jr. & Linda L. Remy, *Foster Parents Who Stay Licensed and the Role of Training*, 2 J. Soc. Sci. Res. 373; Bronwyn S. Fees et al., *Satisfaction with Foster Parenting: Assessment One Year After Training*, 20 Child. & Youth Servs. Rev. 347, 349-50, 360-61 (1998).

221 922 Ky. Admin. Regs. 1:350, § 8(5) (2002).

222 Bonnie T. Zima et al., *Help-Seeking Steps and Service Use for Children in Foster Care*, 27 J. Behav. Health Servs. & Res. 271, 277 (2000). Stakeholders in both Alabama and Alaska suggested that foster parents would benefit from training on effective advocacy for children in the school system. See Alabama Final Report, *supra* note 25, at 52; Alaska Final Report, *supra* note 22, at 52-53.

223 Andrew Sanchirico & Kary Jablonka, *Keeping Foster Children Connected to Biological Parents: The Impact of Foster Parent Training and Support*, 17 Child & Adolescent Soc. Work J. 185 (2000).

Existing pre-service curricula for foster parents focus on helping children heal from the loss and grief they suffer. But foster parents also experience attachment, loss, and grief as each child comes to and goes from their home. Training can and should prepare foster parents "for the inevitably and normalcy of their grief reactions. . . . Foster parents need to be reminded not to make important decisions such as dropping out of foster care, taking in another child, or leaving a spouse while they are going through periods of loss and grief."<sup>224</sup>

It is apparent that much is expected of the training provided to foster parents. Which of these goals it actually achieves is difficult to assess. The results of the limited evaluations of training that have been done are discussed below.

### Pre-Service Curricula<sup>225</sup>

There is no universal standardized curriculum used by agencies throughout the United States. However, most states use one of several pre-service training packages. **Chart 2** lists the states currently using each curriculum. In some states, the curriculum may not be in use statewide.

(continued on p.20)

224 Susan B. Edelstein et al., *Helping Foster Parents Cope with Separation, Loss, and Grief*, 80 Child Welfare 5, 18-19 (2001).

225 We did not review the training materials described in this section. CWI allows only certified trainers to purchase the MAPP materials, and its PS package is not yet available. CWLA's PRIDE program is available, but the complete package costs over \$1200. The summaries that follow are based upon written descriptions provided by the organizations marketing the programs and on interviews with representatives from those organizations.

**Chart 2**

State	Curriculum
Alabama	MAPP
Alaska	
Arizona	
Arkansas	PRIDE
California	PRIDE/MAPP
Colorado	
Connecticut	PRIDE
Delaware	PRIDE
D.C.	MAPP
Florida	MAPP
Georgia	MAPP
Hawaii	PRIDE
Idaho	
Illinois	PRIDE
Indiana	
Iowa	MAPP
Kansas	MAPP
Kentucky	MAPP
Louisiana	MAPP
Maine	
Maryland	
Massachusetts	MAPP
Michigan	PRIDE
Minnesota	
Mississippi	
Missouri	
Montana	
Nebraska	PRIDE
Nevada	
New Hampshire	
New Jersey	
New Mexico	
New York	MAPP
North Carolina	MAPP
North Dakota	PRIDE
Ohio	MAPP
Oklahoma	
Oregon	
Pennsylvania	MAPP
Rhode Island	
South Carolina	
South Dakota	PRIDE/MAPP
Tennessee	
Texas	PRIDE/MAPP
Utah	
Vermont	PRIDE
Virginia	
Washington	
West Virginia	PRIDE
Wisconsin	
Wyoming	

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.19)

## Foster Parent Training

The two most widely used curricula—MAPP/GPS and PRIDE—have been adapted for use in several foreign countries, where they have had a significant impact on the type of care provided to children.<sup>226</sup> In Hungary, where child protection legislation in 1997 mandated the use of a version of PRIDE,

the number of children in residential settings have actually started to significantly decrease. Children's and infant's homes are being closed down, and over 50% of all children previously

Each of the three training packages described here<sup>228</sup> emphasizes teamwork. Teamwork among the agency, biological parents, and foster parents is also part of agencies' policies. Nevertheless, a common theme among the CFS Reviews was a disparity between what foster parents are being taught about teamwork and the reality of their day-to-day relationships with the agency.<sup>229</sup>

Tom Morton points out that caseworkers in state agencies do not necessarily receive the same emphasis on teamwork in their own training and are often in a position where they "don't have much power [themselves] and [they] don't want to share it."<sup>230</sup> Foster parents who have completed their pre-service orientation programs and are prepared to take a positive role in their foster child's placement often

228 Some of the literature refers to a 12- or 21-hour NOVA training program. See, e.g., Jane H. Lee & Thomas P. Holland, *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Foster Parent Training*, 1 RES. ON SOC. WORK PRAC. 162 (1991); Ronald D. Simon & Denise K. Simon, *The Effect of Foster Parent Selection and Training on Service Delivery*, 61 Child Welfare 515 (1982). NOVA appears to have been the predecessor to MAPP. See Lee & Holland, *supra*, at 167. We do not include a review of that program.

229 See, e.g., Arkansas Final Report, *supra* note 23, at 63; Connecticut Final Report, *supra* note 16, at 68; Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Child and Family Services Review: District of Columbia—Summary of Findings 71 (2002) ("The pre-service training for foster and adoptive parents emphasizes the team approach to providing care for the District's children. Because Agency staff do not receive this training, the review found that some foster and adoptive parents are not included as members of the team when making decisions about children. Interviews with foster parents revealed that this issue was a point of contention."); North Dakota Final Report, *supra* note 11, at 43.

find themselves rebuffed by caseworkers reluctant to relinquish control. Barbara Wright, a former president of the Hawaii Foster Parent Association and past PRIDE trainer, agrees. "PRIDE does teach teamwork, but when [the foster parents] get out there, that's not actually what's happening," she told us. "We have many social workers who still operate under that old philosophy of 'It's my show.'"<sup>231</sup>

### MAPP

Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting Group Preparation and Selection of Foster and/or Adoptive Families (MAPP/GPS) was developed by the Child Welfare Institute (CWI) in 1985 and was revised in 1990 and 1991. It is used in at least 14 states.<sup>232</sup> MAPP involves 10 parent group meetings, each lasting about three hours. These meetings provide information on such topics as agency policies and procedures and medical, legal, and financial issues, as well as skill-building activities. Participants complete an initial Family Profile and then, throughout the process, complete a series of self-assessment worksheets. CWI also provides another version

230 Telephone Interview by Amy Chen with Tom Morton, President, Child Welfare Institute (Apr. 17, 2003).

231 Telephone interview by Amy Chen with Barbara Wright, Former President, Hawaii Foster Parent Association (May 14, 2003).

232 See, e.g., Florida Final Report, *supra* note 26, at 57; Georgia Final Report, *supra* note 155, at 48; Kansas Final Report, *supra* note 14, at 57; Massachusetts Final Report, *supra* note 15, at 42; New York Final Report, *supra* note 30, at 74; North Carolina Final Report, *supra* note 155, at 47; Children's Bureau, U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs., Final Report: Tennessee Child and Family Services Review 63 (2002).

of the MAPP package for individuals.

MAPP is designed both to prepare foster and/or adoptive parents for their responsibilities and to assist in the selection and screening of applicants. The curriculum includes a self-assessment and reflection component in addition to the information and skills training portion. "Fostering or adopting is a lifestyle choice," says CWI President Tom Morton, "and you really have to go through a lot of questions to decide if this is what you want to do. [Potential foster or adoptive parents] need to be able to say, 'This is not for me,' before they disrupt a child's placement."<sup>233</sup>

Not all individuals who complete MAPP training will actually choose to go on to become foster parents. Morton cited one study done in Texas, which showed that families who have completed the MAPP curriculum are also more likely to refuse a placement if they feel that they cannot handle the child. That may not be preferable from the point of view of the state agency, but in the end, Morton said, he believed it was better for the child and the family.

The core of the program is 12 key skills identified as critical to successful foster and adoptive parenting. Foster and adoptive families must be able to do the following things:

233 Telephone Interview by Amy Chen with Tom Morton, President, Child Welfare Institute (Apr. 17, 2003).

*Social Workers involved in training programs for foster parents should examine carefully the curricula offered for their use and not simply assume that popularity or ideological compatibility of any curriculum substitutes for evidence of its effectiveness*

Jane H. Lee & Thomas P. Holland, *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Foster Parent Training*, 1 Res. on Soc. Work Prac. 162, 172 (1991).

placed in congregate care are placed with foster families.<sup>227</sup>

226 Mária Herczog et al., *The Multi-national Transfer of Competency-Based Foster Parent Assessment, Selection, and Training: A Nine-Country Case Study*, 80 Child Welfare 631 (2001).

227 *Id.* at 639 (quoting an impact evaluation study by the Hungarian Department of Family, Child, and Youth Policy).

- Know their own family
- Communicate effectively
- Know the children
- Build strengths and meet needs
- Work in partnership
- Be loss and attachment experts
- Manage behaviors
- Build connections
- Build self-esteem
- Assure health and safety
- Assess impact on their own family
- Make an informed decision

In a recent published study of a group of foster parents in Kansas, where foster care services have been privatized, 90 percent of the foster parents responding to the survey agreed that the MAPP training adequately prepared them for their early responsibilities of foster parenting.<sup>234</sup>

Years of experience with the MAPP curriculum, in combination with advice from the National Foster Parent Association Board of Directors, led to CWI's creation of a new training program, for foster parents only, called "Partnering for Safety and Permanence" (PS).<sup>235</sup> PS is described as "the first comprehensive preparation and selection program for foster parents to be developed since the passage of the Adoption and Safe Families Act," and it is supposed to provide foster parents with

more honest and realistic scenarios than other preparation programs by using "case examples of highly provocative, and highly realistic behaviors of children who have been abused, sexually abused, emotionally maltreated and neglected."<sup>236</sup> Currently, no state is using just the PS curriculum, but a number of states that had been using MAPP have converted their programs to a revision of MAPP that incorporates some components from PS.<sup>237</sup>

The authors of PS suggest that foster parents who complete the program are better able to make an informed decision about entering foster parenting, less likely to be surprised by the behaviors of children entering their homes, and more likely to be equipped with skills, strategies, and techniques to respond to challenging and difficult behaviors. PS incorporates the concept of shared parenting, and, as do other curricula, it emphasizes teamwork with the agency. The core of the PS program is a series of nine meetings, each lasting approximately three hours and led by a trainer who has completed an eight-day CWI preparation program. The 27-hour length of the program is similar to the PRIDE and MAPP programs. Program materials include a leader's guide, participant handbook, five videos, and a PowerPoint presentation. The meet-

ing topics include loss and grieving, helping children and youth manage their own behaviors, and sharing parenting. In addition to attending these meetings, prospective foster parents are helped to assess their strengths, resources, and needs through the completion of various instruments, including EcoMaps and Family Maps, and private consultations with the PS leader. The program is still too new to assess its utility.

### PRIDE

The Child Welfare League of America developed the Foster Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) curriculum in 1993.<sup>238</sup> Like MAPP, PRIDE was designed to help prepare, screen, and select foster parent applicants. It also includes a series of in-home consultations similar to those used in MAPP. Fourteen state child welfare agencies and several universities collaborated on its development. PRIDE is currently under revision, with a new version due to be published this summer.<sup>239</sup> PRIDE's pre-service curriculum focuses upon five competencies:

- protecting and nurturing children,
- meeting developmental needs and addressing developmental delays,
- supporting children's rela-

tionships with their birth families,

- connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships meant to last a lifetime, and
- working as a member of a professional team.

In a series of nine three-hour sessions, PRIDE trainers cover topics such as teamwork towards permanency, meeting the developmental needs of children, attachment and loss, discipline, and continuing family relationships. PRIDE materials include resource readings for participants, videos, worksheets for each session, and a Family Development Plan to help establish a foster family's training goals and methods for achieving them.

In addition to the pre-service component, PRIDE includes 10 in-service modules called Foster PRIDE Core Training. The core training includes topics such as responding to signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and understanding the effects of chemical dependency upon families and children.

### IHS

The Institute for Human Services (IHS)<sup>240</sup> also has developed a pre-service training curriculum to be used for joint training of foster, adoptive, and kinship caregivers.<sup>241</sup> IHS' training

*(continued on p.22)*

<sup>234</sup> Friesen, *supra* note 177, at 316.

<sup>235</sup> The summary of PS that follows is taken from Child Welfare Inst., *Is Your Agency Using 20<sup>th</sup> Century Parenting Techniques to Prepare Foster Parents for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenges?*

<sup>236</sup> *Id.* at 1.

<sup>237</sup> Telephone Interview by Amy Chen with Tom Morton, President, Child Welfare Institute (Apr. 17, 2003).

<sup>238</sup> E-mail from Maureen Leighton, Associate Director, Walker Treischman National Center for Professional Development, to Amy Chen, Intern, National Center for Youth Law (June 12, 2003) (on file with author).  
<sup>239</sup> *Id.*

<sup>240</sup> For information about IHS, see <http://www.ihs-trainet.com>.

<sup>241</sup> We were unable to find any reference in the CFS Reviews final reports to IHS training or assessments of its pre-service curriculum.

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.21)

## Foster Parent Training

package is currently in use in approximately six states.<sup>242</sup> The competencies included in IHS sessions are drawn from discussions with caregivers and professionals that were conducted over a year. IHS pre-service consists of twelve workshops covering topics similar to those in PRIDE and MAPP. They include:

- Impact of Abuse and Neglect on Child Development
- Attachment, Separation, and Placement
- Discipline
- Sexual Abuse
- Cultural Issues in Placement

*The core of the program is 12 key skills identified as critical to successful foster and adoptive parenting.*

- Teambuilding

As with PRIDE and MAPP, the IHS curriculum includes opportunities for self assessment, agency assessment and

<sup>242</sup> The states include Indiana, Minnesota, Nevada, Utah, Wisconsin, and parts of Pennsylvania. E-mail from Betsy Keefer, Program Manager, Institute for Human Services, to Amy Chen, Intern, National Center for Youth Law (May 23, 2003) (on file with author).

screening of the family, and instruction in the skills and knowledge necessary to foster parenting.

IHS describes its curriculum as different from other pre-service training in several ways. A program manager at IHS points out that agencies expect foster and adoptive parents “to welcome children into the intimacy of their homes and/or work with birth parents of very different cultural backgrounds on reunification (foster parents) or on openness in adoption.” Other programs have sometimes shortchanged cultural issues, she believes. IHS has placed greater emphasis on this area. Secondly, the IHS curricula was developed with foster, adoptive, and kinship providers all in mind. It is not an adaptation of foster parent training for adoptive parents and kinship providers but rather is a training program that emphasizes all three styles of care-giving. Finally, IHS specifically reviewed its list of competencies to determine which

should be included in pre-service training and which made more sense for a foster parent with some experience.<sup>243</sup>

In our interviews, we also learned that adoption of a particular curriculum by a state or county agency does not ensure that the training

<sup>243</sup> E-mail from Betsy Keefer, Program Manager, Institute for Human Services, to Amy Chen, Intern, National Center for Youth Law (May 22, 2003) (on file with author).

is implemented as designed and intended. While states are encouraged to stick with the MAPP 30-hour curriculum, Tom Morton explained that, once the curriculum is sold as a professional development system, states have limited copyright access to it and can change it to suit their own needs.<sup>244</sup> Some will alter the training by cutting down on the number of hours required to complete the program.<sup>245</sup> In Hawaii, where PRIDE training is provided through a contract agency, the state foster parent association recently listed a number of concerns about the implementation of the training program.<sup>246</sup> Its concerns included:

- Trainers have limited experience working with the Department of Human Services and as a result are unable to provide accurate, practical information about working with the Department, even though the contract requires trainers to be knowledgeable about the Department’s policies, procedures, and services.
- Insufficient preparation time is allotted for the two trainers, and co-trainers are often “window-dressing” rather than persons with substantial foster parenting experience.

<sup>244</sup> Telephone Interview by Amy Chen with Tom Morton, President, Child Welfare Institute (Apr. 17, 2003).

<sup>245</sup> For example, Hawaii foster parents report that their PRIDE curriculum has been cut to 18 hours. Telephone interview by Amy Chen with Barbara Wright, Former President, Hawaii Foster Parent Association (May 14, 2003).

<sup>246</sup> Memorandum from Sarah T. Casken, Hawaii Foster Parent Association, to Dave Boerner (Oct. 4, 2002).

- There is inadequate, truncated use of the assessment tool, and it is suggested that more than one home visit be scheduled as part of the assessment, with the first occurring near the beginning of the training cycle and including the co-trainer.<sup>247</sup>

### Obstacles

Many factors prevent, deter, or discourage foster parents from attending training. Training must be accessible and must be provided in places and at times that take into account foster parents’ schedules and responsibilities.<sup>248</sup> One third of foster parents surveyed in Arkansas reported that training was not held at a convenient time and place.<sup>249</sup>

Simply making training accessible, however, does not guarantee that foster parents will attend. As Sarah Casken from the Hawaii Foster Parent Association advised,

Once you get them in the door, you have to provide something meaningful when they’re there. They have to feel that something is benefiting them—helping with the care of their child—if you want them to come back to the next training. For example, information

<sup>247</sup> *Id.*

<sup>248</sup> CWLA Standards, *supra* note 40, § 3.9 (stating that the agency should schedule pre-service training sessions so that they are “convenient for the attendees,” including allowing at least one week between each session so that the attendees can reflect on what they learned, scheduling the sessions to accommodate the work and family schedules of the attendees, and holding the sessions in settings accessible to the attendees).

<sup>249</sup> Ctr. for the Study of Soc. Policy, *supra* note 164, at 27.

about resources in the community or hints on how to access resources for children is useful to old and new foster parents. But the information provided must be accurate. Foster parents who learn they have been misinformed or misled about policy are less likely to return.<sup>250</sup>

CWLA *Standards* provides that an agency should “demonstrate the value it places on ongoing development of foster parents by providing financial or other supports for foster parents’ development.”<sup>251</sup> State policies often eliminate some obstacles to attending training by making reimbursement for training-related expenses available. For example, Florida’s statute specifically requires the department to reimburse foster parents for travel and childcare expenses.<sup>252</sup> Oregon allows reimbursement for tuition, childcare, per diem, and travel expenses.<sup>253</sup> Kentucky authorizes reimbursement for mileage, babysitting, and tuition/fees up to \$100 per year for resource families with medically fragile children, and treatment home parents are eligible for an extra \$100 per year. Denial of training approval and reimbursement may be subject to a fair hearing.<sup>254</sup>

250 Telephone interview by Amy Chen with Sarah T. Casken, (May 14, 2003)

251 CWLA Standards, *supra* note 40, § 3.35.

252 Fla. Stat. Ann. § 409.175(14)(d) (West 2003); Fla. Admin. Code Ann. r. 65C-13.003(2)(a), (b) (2003).

253 Or. Admin. R. 413-310-0120 (2003)

254 922 Ky. Admin. Regs. 1:350, § 12(4), (5) (2002). The reimbursable costs to foster parents in Michigan for attending foster parent training include the costs of transportation, childcare, tuition, and training supplies. Mich. Admin. Code r. 400.2023(2)(a) (2001).

Some states limit assistance to post-licensing training,<sup>255</sup> while others cover pre-service training as well.<sup>256</sup>

The extent to which information about these policies is routinely shared with foster parents and the frequency with which foster parents actually access funds or other resources to help them attend training are unknown.

### The Usefulness of Training

Relatively little research has been done on the effectiveness of foster parent training. The National Resource Center for Foster Care & Permanency Planning lists a total of nine articles on this subject that were published between 1978 and January, 2001, the last time the list was revised.<sup>257</sup> Most of this research was completed before the training packages

255 See, e.g., N.M. Admin. Code tit. 8, § 10.5.8(c) (2003) (allowing Child Protective Services child care services to be used to enable foster parents to maintain employment or obtain job training and/or attend educational programs); Conn. Dep’t of Children & Families, Policy Manual § 41-26-10, <http://www.state.ct.us/dcf/Policy/Fadopt41/41-26-10.htm> (effective date Mar. 25, 2002).

256 See, e.g., Iowa Admin. Code r. 441-156.18 (2003) (providing \$100 stipend for foster parent applicants who complete the required pre-service training program and are issued a foster home license and also paying the same amount when the family’s license is renewed for per diem expenses related to meeting the in-service training requirement); N.J. Admin. Code tit. 10, § 122C-2.7(f) (2003) (providing for reimbursement for transportation, parking, and babysitting costs incurred by the applicant that are directly related to attendance at pre-service training sessions). Wyoming requires that the 16 hours of annual in-service training be provided “at no cost to the foster parents.” Wy. R. & Regs. FAMS PS ch. 7, § 2(c) (2003). South Dakota regulations authorize a flat-rate, partial reimbursement for in-service training. S.D. Admin. R. 67:42:05:03(2) (2002).

257 Nat’l Res. Ctr. for Foster Care & Permanency Planning, Effectiveness of Foster Parent Training: Annotated Bibliography (2001). <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/bib/efpt.pdf>.

like MAPP or PRIDE were developed.

There is little information in the CFS Reviews final reports or statewide assessments about the effectiveness of training. The observation in Texas’ statewide assessment is typical of many reports: “PRS [the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services] believes that its training program for foster parents improve outcomes for children.”<sup>258</sup>

Many agencies conduct surveys of participants to assess the adequacy of the training.<sup>259</sup> In Ohio, “executives of public children service associations” were asked about the effectiveness of the foster parent training program. About two thirds of those responding agreed that the needs of foster parents were being met.<sup>260</sup> In Arkansas, foster parents were asked about the “usefulness” of both the pre-service and in-service training they received. Three quarters of the respondents reported that the training was very useful or generally useful to them in caring for the children placed in their homes.<sup>261</sup> Participants in pre-service and in-service trainings in Massachusetts gave high marks to trainers’ skill and training content,

258 Texas Statewide Assessment, *supra* note 178, at 50.

259 See, e.g., Children’s Bureau, U.S. Dep’t of Health & Human Servs., Arizona Child and Family Services Review: Final Report 55 (2002).

260 Ohio Final Report, *supra* note 33, at 63.

261 Ctr. for the Study of Soc. Policy, *supra* note 164, at 25-26. Similar findings are reported in Texas’ statewide assessment. See Texas Statewide Assessment, *supra* note 178, at 49.

but more than a third reported that the sessions they attended did not help them to acquire practical skills they could use in the day-to-day care of children placed in their homes.<sup>262</sup> In Florida, however, one fifth of the respondents in a survey of 700 foster parents answered that the in-service training “never” met the needs of the children in their home.<sup>263</sup>

### Early Research<sup>264</sup>

Published results of the early foster parent training research suggest several positive outcomes for foster parents and the children placed in their homes. A quarter of a century ago, when training was rarely mandated, Boyd and Remy asked, “Is Foster-Parent Training Worthwhile?”<sup>265</sup> After examining the placements of 168 children among a group of approximately one hundred foster parents licensed in 1973 and following up two years later, they determined that it was. Training was an effective way to keep foster homes available once licensed.<sup>266</sup> But, in addition to improving foster parent retention, training<sup>267</sup> also had an impact on outcomes for children. Aborted place-

(continued on p.26)

262 Massachusetts Final Report, *supra* note 15, at 42.

263 Fla. State Foster/Adoptive Parent Ass’n, Inc., Outcome Report from Foster Parent Survey.

264 For a brief critique of these early studies, see Lee & Holland, *supra* note 228, at 163-66.

265 Boyd & Remy, *supra* note 90.

266 *Id.* at 287-88.

267 The precise nature of the training the foster parents in the study received is not clear. Some of them participated in “an intensive, behaviorally oriented sixteen-week program . . . complemented with in-home visits from the private agency staff.” *Id.* at 278.

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.23)

## Foster Parent Training

ments and other undesirable placement outcomes were reduced.<sup>268</sup> Finally, their analysis of homes in which placement of a child preceded training suggested “the futility of placing the highest-risk children into the homes of inexperienced parents before they had been trained.”<sup>269</sup>

Several years later, Simon and Simon’s evaluation of the NOVA pre-service training program found similar results. Re-placement rates and placement failures in trained foster homes were significantly less than in untrained homes.<sup>270</sup> These findings were considered even more encouraging since trained foster parents accept-

authors also found that mandating training as a condition of licensure did not deter applicants from pursuing a license.<sup>272</sup>

Guerny and Wolfgang evaluated the results of a skills training program developed at Penn State University in which foster parents met in groups of 12 with two leaders—usually an experienced foster parent and an agency staff member.<sup>273</sup> Skills training was approximately equally divided between (1) skills of empathy, relationship development, and understanding child’s needs and development and (2) child management.<sup>274</sup> The majority of time in the 10-session program was spent in demonstration and role-playings. The authors, using several instruments, sought to determine (1) the degree of acceptance foster parents feel and express to foster children and (2) foster parents’ ability to apply the skills taught to a variety of difficult hypothetical interactions with children so as to promote child

development. Their results confirmed that the training program was successful and that the gains

among trainees were sustained over time.<sup>275</sup>

A few early studies, using

<sup>272</sup> *Id.*  
<sup>273</sup> Louise F. Guerny & Glenn Wolfgang, *Long-Range Evaluation of Effects on Foster Parents of a Foster Parent Skills Training Program*, 10 *J. Clinical Child Psychol.* 33 (1981); see also Hampson & Tavormina, *supra* note 195, at 294.  
<sup>274</sup> Guerny & Wolfgang, *supra* note 273, at 34.  
<sup>275</sup> *Id.* at 37.

other measures of worthiness, were not as positive. In the only published study to examine the impact of either of the two most popular pre-service curricula, Lee and Holland found no significant differences between a group of parents who completed MAPP training and those who did not. Their study, however, like some of the others the authors criticize, suffered from a very small sample—17 foster parents total—and the use of a single limited measure—the standardized Adolescent/Adult Parenting Inventory (AAPI).<sup>276</sup> Levant and Slattery, again using a very small sample—14 children and foster parents—sought to assess the outcome of their skills training program by assessing, among other things, the children’s self-esteem and the interaction between foster parent and child discussing a problem they chose. The pilot study found no demonstrably positive effects on these outcomes.<sup>277</sup>

One other study is worth longer discussion here. In an article published in *Child Welfare* more than 10 years ago, Chamberlain and others at the Oregon Social Learning Center sought to determine if increased reimbursement, training, and support would contribute to measurable improvements in foster

<sup>276</sup> See Lee & Holland, *supra* note 228, at 172. The AAPI includes four scales that cover developmental expectations, value of physical punishment, parent-child roles, and empathy toward child needs.  
<sup>277</sup> See Ronald F. Levant & Susan C. Slattery, *Systematic Skills Training for Foster Parents*, 11 *J. Clinical Child Psychol.* 138 (1982).

care.<sup>278</sup> Chamberlain’s study randomly assigned foster parents to one of three groups. The first group received enhanced support and training plus an increased board payment of \$70 per month. The second received only the extra stipend, and the third group, which was the control group, received neither additional financial assistance nor additional support. Seventy-two children between the ages of four and seven were in the foster homes involved in the study. They had all been in care for at least three months when the study began.

Foster parents in group one received two types of additional support and training. Each week, they attended a two-hour session with other foster parents and a group leader trained in behavior-management methods and had three telephone consultations with the group leader during which they reviewed the child’s progress and problems. The group sessions were specifically tailored to increase foster parents’ skills in child behavior management, using videotapes to illustrate several methods and asking participants to draw upon their own experiences to discuss particular techniques.

Chamberlain’s study measured the impact of the additional supports on foster parent retention and a number of child outcomes, including frequency of behavior

<sup>278</sup> Patricia Chamberlain et al., *Enhanced Services and Stipends for Foster Parents: Effects on Retention Rates and Outcomes for Children*, 71 *Child Welfare* 387 (1992).

*Simply making training accessible, however, does not guarantee that foster parents will attend.*

ed placements “considered more difficult than those placed in untrained homes as indicated by length of placement and the previous number of foster care placements.”<sup>271</sup> Furthermore, the

<sup>268</sup> *Id.* at 292.  
<sup>269</sup> *Id.* at 289.  
<sup>270</sup> Simon & Simon, *supra* note 228, at 515.  
<sup>271</sup> *Id.* at 524.

problems and stability of placement. Foster parent responses on the Parent Daily Report (PDR) shortly after the child's initial placement and three months later were used to determine any changes in the child's problems. Placement stability was audited through ongoing checks to determine which of the study children had left the foster homes and the reason(s) for their departure. In addition, study staff completed an assessment of foster parents' skills at the outset, and foster parents and caseworkers were asked to rate the effectiveness of weekly training and support groups. Responses on the PDR were used to set training agendas for weekly meetings.

Though this study involved a small number of foster parents and children,<sup>279</sup> the findings are encouraging. Additional training and support had a positive impact on placement stability, children's behaviors, and foster parent retention:

- **Placement Stability**—Children in group one “had significantly more successful days in care” than children in either of the other two groups. Of the children in the supported groups, 29 percent failed in their foster care placements, while the failure rate in the control group was 53 percent.<sup>280</sup>

- **Children's Behavior**—Though foster parents in group one reported “a higher level of occurrence of child problems initially than mothers in either of the other two groups, after participating in the [training and support], they reported the lowest level of occurrence of child problems.”<sup>281</sup>

- **Foster Parent Retention**—The overall statewide dropout rate was 40 percent. For group one, the dropout rate was 9.6 percent; for group two, 14.3 percent; and for group three, 26 percent. The combination of additional stipends and support and training resulted in a dropout rate that was nearly two thirds less than observed in the control group.<sup>282</sup>

Caseworker ratings on foster parent skills also attested to the efficacy of the training. While the foster mothers in group one were rated the lowest on their ability to use appropriate discipline, at the conclusion of the study they were rated as “having definitely improved in their behavior management skills.”<sup>283</sup>

### Recent Studies

Two recent studies of pre-service training in the District of Columbia and New Hampshire add significantly

to the body of knowledge on foster parent training.

Last year, the Consortium for Child Welfare in the District of Columbia (CCW) undertook an evaluation of its foster parent training program.<sup>284</sup> CCW uses the PRIDE training curriculum. The existing PRIDE curriculum contains an instrument for participants to evaluate the training in seven areas<sup>285</sup> and for the trainers to assess the participants' achievement of the core competencies. CCW modified the trainer's instrument to include a five-point Likert scale and developed pre- and post-tests to measure changes in the applicants' knowledge.<sup>286</sup> Six CCW member agencies participated in this program, including Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, Lutheran Social Services, and Family and Child Services of Washington, DC.<sup>287</sup> During 2002, 426 persons registered to begin the 30-hour PRIDE training cycle, 300 persons attended at least one of the 10 three-hour training sessions, and 127 persons completed all 10 training sessions.<sup>288</sup> Two thirds of the participants who began the training were Maryland residents; about one quarter lived in the

District of Columbia.<sup>289</sup>

Trainers completed evaluations of 98 participants, including some who completed the 30-hour course and some who did not. They concluded that participants demonstrated overall successful mastery of the five core competencies with a total mean score of 4.52 out of 5.00. The lowest scores were reported on meeting developmental needs and connecting children to safe, nurturing relationships.<sup>290</sup>

Participants reported a high degree of satisfaction in each of the seven areas of assessment.<sup>291</sup> However, it appears that this assessment of training was conducted before any of the participants were licensed or had cared for any foster child.<sup>292</sup> Asking foster parents about the usefulness and adequacy of pre-service training after they had some actual experience caring for a child in care might produce a more informed evaluation of certain aspects of the training.

CCW's pre- and post-training questionnaires included a series of true-or-false questions testing changes in knowledge in five areas: understanding foster care, attachment, grief and loss, child development, and universal precautions.<sup>293</sup> Examples of the true-or-false questions are as follows:

*(continued on p.26)*

279 Chamberlain's model is being replicated San Diego, California, to determine if similar results can be obtained with a larger group in an urban area.  
280 Chamberlain et al., *supra* note 278, at 396.

281 *Id.* at 399. Data from Boyd and Remy's earlier study also “suggest that behavior in the trained-parent placements had actually been changed for the better.” Boyd & Remy, *supra* note 90, at 295 n.19.  
282 Chamberlain et al., *supra* note 278, at 395.  
283 *Id.* at 399.

284 See Consortium for Child Welfare, Foster Parent Training Program: Annual Report, FY 2002 (2003), <http://consortiumforchildwelfare.org/documents/trainingreport.pdf> [hereinafter CCW Report].

285 The seven areas include content, training organization and atmosphere, quality of trainers, strengthened skills and knowledge, met expectations, made them feel proud of their role, and overall.  
286 CCW Report, *supra* note 284, at 12. The Likert scale included the ratings “not achieved,” “partially achieved,” and “fully achieved.” See *id.* at 24 fig.14.  
287 *Id.* at 8.  
288 *Id.* at 16, 20.

289 *Id.* at 23.  
290 *Id.* at 24 & fig.14.  
291 *Id.* at 24 & fig.15.  
292 See *id.* at 12 (stating that participants were asked to assess training “[a]t the conclusion of the training cycle”).  
293 See *id.* at 25 fig.16.

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.25)

## Foster Parent Training

- As a foster parent one of my jobs is to help support the biological parent.
- All children show loss by crying.
- Spanking is an OK way to correct a child's behavior.
- When children are placed in foster care it means they have "bad" parents.
- A foster parent is part of the treatment team working for the child.<sup>294</sup>

Overall, applicants demonstrated a 13-percent increase in knowledge, with the greatest increase in the area of grief and loss.<sup>295</sup>

CCW's study also provided some interesting information about completion rates.

*A substantial number of participants attended 24 to 27 hours of training but failed to complete the final session or two.*

Among the six agencies that sent participants to the training, there was a 24-percent range in the rate of completion—i.e., less than a third of participants from one agency completed the course, while 54 percent from another finished all ten sessions. While

<sup>294</sup> See *id.* at 45-46  
<sup>295</sup> *Id.* at 25 fig.16.

CCW notes that its evaluation did not try to determine the reasons for this variance, it identified several programmatic differences that may have contributed to it, including the agencies' "methods of recruitment and orientation of foster parents, the sequencing of the foster parenting training in the agencies' recruitment, training and licensure process, and the support and follow-up activities provided to prospective parents while they are in the training and licensure process."<sup>296</sup>

A substantial number of participants attended 24 to 27 hours of training but failed to complete the final session or two. If participants who attended most of the training could have been encouraged to make up the one or two missing classes, the overall completion rate would have increased from 42 percent to 71 percent.<sup>297</sup> CCW also found that participants were more likely to complete the five-week cycle of training offered on Tuesday

and Thursday evenings than the 10-week cycle offered on Saturday mornings.<sup>298</sup>

CCW has refined its evaluation process and is collecting data in 2003 to compare to this benchmark data.

Last year, the College for Lifelong Learning (CLL) in

<sup>296</sup> *Id.* at 27.  
<sup>297</sup> *Id.* at 28.  
<sup>298</sup> *Id.* at 27. The completion rate was 47 percent for the evening sessions versus 35 percent for the more drawn-out weekend sessions. *Id.*

New Hampshire completed an evaluation of its pre-service training program.<sup>299</sup> CLL, part of the University System of New Hampshire, provides training for adoptive parents, staff at residential facilities, and public and private child welfare agencies, as well as foster parent applicants. It uses a 21-hour curriculum entitled "Foundations for Fostering," which was developed in 1999 by instructors at CLL in collaboration with agency staff and foster and adoptive parents. Foundations for Fostering is divided into seven three-hour modules, some of which cover topics similar to those covered by the other major curricula (e.g., impact of trauma on child development, grief and loss, maintaining family connectedness).<sup>300</sup>

Participants in the evaluation of Foundations for Fostering were recruited from 138 applicants who belonged to one of eight groups that began the training series in 2002. Fifty-five persons completed all of the modules,<sup>301</sup> and 41 agreed to complete two questionnaires that were part of the program evaluation. Three months after the training was completed, evaluators asked those who completed the training and were caring for a foster child to participate in a follow-up interview. Thirteen persons—five couples and three other participants—out of the 41 who started agreed

<sup>299</sup> See Cook & Fletcher, *supra* note 211.  
<sup>300</sup> *Id.* at 5-6.  
<sup>301</sup> The rate of attrition appears similar to the D.C. experience.

to an interview. The majority of those interviewed had fostered a child for approximately six weeks.<sup>302</sup> Each of the two "Self Assessment" questionnaires asked ten questions based upon Foundations for Fostering learning objectives.<sup>303</sup> Foster parents were asked to assess their preparedness or familiarity with a number of skills and information considered key to their role as foster parents. The questionnaires included general questions, such as "How prepared do you feel about being a foster parent?," to the more specific "How familiar are you with how foster parents can work with children who have been sexually abused?" and "How familiar are you with how foster parents can provide positive forms of discipline?"<sup>304</sup>

Participants completed the pre-test prior to beginning the first training session. A post-test with the same questions was administered immediately following the last training session. The results of the surveys indicate that Foundations for Fostering training "contributed to the knowledge base of prospective foster parents [and] enhanced feelings of preparedness and confidence."<sup>305</sup>

Responses obtained during the interviews are quoted extensively in the final report. They reveal a number of positive attributes of

<sup>302</sup> *Id.* at 7-8.  
<sup>303</sup> *Id.* at 9.  
<sup>304</sup> *Id.* at 26.  
<sup>305</sup> *Id.* at 2.

the training and trainers, as well as some suggestions for improvement. Many participants emphasized the importance of instructors' sharing their personal experiences of caring for a foster child. Positive stories "on how they handled situations and then how the positive came [about]" appeared to give others confidence that they could also handle challenging situations.<sup>306</sup> Other comments indicated that trainers were honest about the behaviors that foster parents could expect to face and that the training helped them to avoid misinterpreting some behaviors.<sup>307</sup> Many persons indicated an area or area(s) in which they could have used more information (e.g., what to do if a child gets sick, what boundaries apply when children visit with their parents, additional behavior management strategies, lists of services available to children).<sup>308</sup> Some of the comments had more to do with agency practices than the training itself. For example, one foster parent was concerned that foster parents had not been told "what they've [foster children] been through" before their placement.<sup>309</sup> Another expressed concern that the high level of support from the agency ended once they were licensed.<sup>310</sup>

If one of the primary objectives of training is to improve foster parents' ability to provide care for children, the effectiveness

of the training cannot be measured solely by asking foster parents about its usefulness and/or relevance. Trainee satisfaction may be one criterion for successful training, but it tells us little about the foster parents' actual application of what they were supposed to learn in training to their day-to-day care of children placed in their homes. Neither the D.C. nor New Hampshire study measured actual foster parent performance.

While pointing out the "inherent difficulties" of using outcome measures in assessing the helping professions, the authors of the New Hampshire study acknowledge an argument "that evaluation should ultimately involve an assessment of client outcomes" and that "it would be ideal to research the impact of foster parent training on foster children themselves."<sup>311</sup> Nonetheless, responses during the interviews suggested that foster parents "retained and to a certain degree applied training knowledge with foster children."<sup>312</sup> For example, one couple reported the usefulness of establishing "house rules," which were explained at one session, while another couple did not "freak out" because "we learned in the class . . . [that] wetting the bed, night tremors, those kinds of things . . . were typical of foster kids . . . [and] it made us feel better knowing that it wasn't

<sup>311</sup> *Id.* at 20.

<sup>312</sup> *Id.* at 17. In addition, the authors of the New Hampshire report note that "none of the interviewees had experienced a disrupted placement at the time of the interview." *Id.* at 12. While encouraging, it should be noted that most had been caring for their foster child an average of no more than six weeks. *See id.* at 8.

us, our house, or [our] situation that was making them do that."<sup>313</sup>

Research underway at the University of Delaware with a multi-million dollar grant from the National Institute of Mental Health promises to add to this body of knowledge. University of Delaware Professor Dozier has developed

an intervention program to help foster and adoptive parents understand, reinterpret, and react more therapeutically to the [attachment] strategies their children have developed. The intervention is being implemented at the time babies and toddlers are placed with foster parents, and whenever children are moved to other foster parents, biological parents, or adoptive parents.<sup>314</sup>

The effectiveness of the training program for foster parents of infants and toddlers will be assessed by following children who enter foster care before caregivers receive training and for five years after the training.<sup>315</sup>

<sup>313</sup> *Id.* at 14-15 (some alteration in original).

<sup>314</sup> Mary Dozier, Research Interests, <http://www.udel.edu/psych/fingerle/dozier.htm> (last visited July 28, 2003).

<sup>315</sup> Neil Thomas, *\$3.7 Million NIMH Grant Funds Research on Foster Parent Training*, *UDaily*, Nov. 26, 2002, <http://www.udel.edu/PR/UDaily/01-02/NIMH112602.html>. Support for Dozier's hypothesis that foster parent training will improve the care of young children with special needs is found in an earlier study by Burry. Caroline L. Burry, *Evaluation of a Training Program for Foster Parents of Infants with Prenatal Substance Effects*, 78 *Child Welfare* 197, 209 (1999) (finding that specialized training had positive influence on foster parents' "attainment of four specific skills that have been found to be useful in caring for infants with prenatal substance effects, as well as the attainment of knowledge about these infants").

## Conclusion—An Advocate's Agenda

Mercedes was a two-year-old, medically fragile child when she entered foster care for, among other reasons, her mother's medical neglect. She suffered from epilepsy and often had multiple seizures during the day. The department first placed Mercedes with her aunt. When the demands of Mercedes' day-to-day care became too intense, the aunt requested a brief respite. The agency placed Mercedes in one foster home for a night and then moved her to another the next day.

Mercedes' life depended upon her caregiver's having the knowledge and training to properly monitor her condition, administer her medication, and care for her during seizures. Her seizures could be completely controlled if her medications were given on the correct schedule in the prescribed doses. Mercedes' disorder also required that she be monitored while she slept so that, if she did have a seizure, she could be turned on her side to avoid suffocation.

Mercedes' aunt had no training in caring for a child with seizure disorders. Agency records indicate that, when Mercedes was dropped off with the aunt by child protective services, the aunt was not given instructions for handling her seizure disorder. The first foster home in which the agency placed Mercedes for respite had no

(continued on p.28)

<sup>306</sup> *Id.* at 13 (alteration in original).

<sup>307</sup> *See id.* at 13-14.

<sup>308</sup> *Id.* at 15-16.

<sup>309</sup> *Id.* at 16.

<sup>310</sup> *Id.*

by Bill Grimm

(continued from p.27)

## Foster Parent Training

training. The second foster mother had received eight hours of training—mostly on how the foster care system works and none on the care of a child with special needs. She would later admit that she did not have the ability, training, or skills to care for a child with Mercedes' disabilities.

*While in the second foster home, Mercedes had a seizure in her sleep and suffocated to death. No one was monitoring her while she slept. It appears that at least one of the foster parents, not having been trained in the importance of following the medication schedule, had failed to*

*Nor is the disparity in training requirements explained by dramatic differences in the children entering each state's foster care system.*

*give Mercedes the prescribed medication.*<sup>316</sup>

The disparity in training requirements among the states is difficult to explain or justify. There is no evidence

316 The summary of this case is taken from Plaintiffs' Response Brief to State's Motion for Summary Judgment, Ramos v. State, No. 99-2-00572-7 (Wash. Super. Ct. June 2, 2003).

that foster parent applicants in one state are any more (or less) competent as parents than those in another state. Applicants in Arizona, which requires only six hours of pre-service training, are presumably no more qualified or experienced than those in Florida or Kentucky, where 30 hours of pre-service training are required. Nor does the disparity appear to be explained by a more rigorous screening process—i.e., states requiring fewer hours before approval do not require that foster parent applicants have successfully parented a child, have earned a degree in early childhood education or psychology, or have completed a parenting skills class in some other context. The number of hours of training often does not depend on the type of foster care being provided or the experience of the prospective foster parents. Fewer hours are not based on the individual foster parent applicant's education, skills, or abilities.

Nor is the disparity in training requirements explained by dramatic differences in the children entering each state's foster care system. Many of the children and youth entering foster care have special needs—medical, behavioral, educational, and emotional.<sup>317</sup> There is no

317 The prevalence of these special needs among children entering foster care has been documented and widely known and acknowledged for more than 15 years within the child welfare community. See, Child Welfare League of America, Standards for Health Care Services for Children in Out of Home Care (1988).

indication that there are appreciably smaller numbers of special needs children entering care in one state as opposed to another.<sup>318</sup>

The three primary pre-service training packages—MAPP, PRIDE, and IHS—all require between 27 and 30 hours to complete. Among pre-service training designers, there seems to be an assumption that 30 hours provides ample time for preparation. However, many foster parents are being licensed and begin receiving children without having completed any of these programs. Though some states, either through legislation or regulation, have increased training requirements, foster parents in many states are licensed without adequate preparation. In certain instances, the training requirements for others working with foster children in much more limited ways is more demanding than what some states require of foster parents. For

318 As part of the data collection requirements of federal law, states' AFCARS systems are required to report on the incidence of children with disabilities in foster care. We were unable to include this information prior to publication but will include it in our next edition, even though we have concerns about the accuracy of the disabilities data reported through AFCARS. See Steven A. Rosenberg & Cordelia C. Robinson, *Using AFCARS to Study Relationships Between Children's Developmental and Medical Conditions and Foster Care Outcomes*, NDACAN Update (Nat'l Data Archive on Child Abuse & Neglect, Ithaca, N.Y.), Fall 2002, at 3:

An analytical issue of which researchers should be cautious concerns estimating the prevalence of developmental-medical problems based on AFCARS data. In 1999, 11 states reported to the AFCARS that less than 5 percent of their foster children under age three had developmental-medical problems. Such low levels are well below estimates provided in studies of foster children and should be regarded skeptically. Indeed, current reports suggest that the incidence of significant developmental and health problems among children in foster care may be as high as 65 percent.

example, California requires Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to complete 24 hours of training before assignment to a child's case.<sup>319</sup>

All states should be required to establish pre-service programs of no less than 30 hours. Everyone familiar with the children entering the system today agrees that they present demands upon caregivers that require skills and knowledge beyond those possessed by the average parent. There is no evidence that setting this expectation deters otherwise qualified applicants from pursuing foster parenting. We have rarely heard complaints from the foster parents that the training requirements are too rigorous and demanding. By continuing to license foster parents who are not adequately prepared for the challenges presented by the children placed in their homes, agencies perpetuate the breakdowns in placement that harm children.

Trainings offered to care providers must be relevant to their roles, taking into account the varying needs and experiences of foster parents. The focus should not be so much on the number of hours of training but on the content of the training offered and mandated. Training should be individualized and matched to the needs of children for whom the foster parent is or will be

319 Cal. Ct. R. 1424(c). A proposed amendment to this rule would increase the initial training requirement to 30 hours to bring it in line with standards of the National CASA.

caring. Foster parents who are caring for infants benefit little from attending sessions on independent living.

Training sessions must be accessible, too, if attendance is to improve. Greater accessibility, however, does not mean that less rigorous and demanding activities should be permitted to be substituted for other types of training. Watching movies, videos, or DVDs, reading books, or listening to tapes should not replace group activities, role playing, mentoring, and classroom instruction that provide for the kind of interaction among parents and instructors that is essential.

Blanket waivers from training should be prohibited. Provisional licenses for extended periods of time (e.g., more than 90 days) should also be prohibited, and the circumstances under which children are placed in such homes should be limited. Public and private agencies should collaborate to make training programs available more frequently so that provisional licenses or waivers of training requirements are largely unnecessary.

Federal and state policy, as well as the standards of national child welfare organizations, encourage the placement of children with relatives. In many states, relatives as a group are either exempted from training requirements or subject to less rigorous training requirements. In order to ensure the quality of care for children placed with relatives,

these exemptions should be eliminated. Current policy and practice serves neither the interests of the caregivers nor those of the children placed in their homes.

As states now face diminishing revenues and budget reductions, items such as foster parent training may be considered a lower priority than other demands on the state treasury. While it may seem an easy target, advocates must convince decision-makers that this and other foster parent supports are integrally tied to better outcomes for children.

Agencies attempting to lower costs of training may also approve less costly methods, such as videos, books, and other “independent studies.” While these may be acceptable alternatives for some in-service training requirements, they should not altogether replace instruction led by experienced trainers in group settings.

Many states continue to look for ways to increase the number of foster parents. A lack of sufficient homes is at crisis proportions in some areas.<sup>320</sup> Abbreviating pre-service training and reducing requirements for in-service training should not be part of an incentive package to bring more parents into the system. We are aware of no research suggesting that recruitment and retention

<sup>320</sup> E.g., Colin Poitras, *A Law on At-Risk Kids: Baby's Death Spurs Proposal That Some Criticize*, Hartford Courant, May 23, 2003, at A1 (“[L]icensed foster homes are already bursting at the seams. As of March 31, there were 124 children stuck in foster homes already over their licensed bed-capacity . . . according to state records.”).

would be improved by such changes in policy. In fact, the opposite seems to be true. Ill-prepared foster parents are likely to leave the system quickly, only exacerbating the shortage of homes.

One of the most typical provisions in biological parents’ case plans is the requirement that they attend parent-training classes. While including biological parents in joint sessions with foster parents might strain the system, pre-service training curricula for foster parents might be adapted for biological parents. Others, such as attorneys and CASAs, might benefit from some of these sessions, and joint meetings would offer the opportunity for participants to learn from one another in a non-adversarial environment.

In Mississippi the review reports filed with the juvenile court every six months include a description of the training received by the foster parents of the child whose case is being reviewed.<sup>321</sup> Children’s representatives—counsel, guardians ad litem, and CASAs—should consider routinely asking about the qualification of the persons entrusted with the day-to-day care of their clients.

<sup>321</sup> Miss. Code Ann. § 43-15-13(6) (2003). Mississippi’s training program for foster care parents is to indoctrinate them as to their proper responsibilities upon a child’s entry into their foster care. The program shall provide a minimum of twelve (12) clock hours of training. The foster care training program shall be satisfactorily completed by such foster care parents prior to or within ninety (90) days after child placement with such parent. Record of such foster care parent’s training program participation shall be filed with the court as part of a foster care child’s review plan once every six (6) months.

Training is simply one of several supportive services that should be provided to foster parents. It is part of a continuum of support that should include respite care, and regular home visits from the caseworker. Foster parents also must have a voice in the policies and practices of the agency and in the decisions for the children placed in their homes. Training must be reinforced by agency practices.<sup>322</sup>

While training of foster care providers is an essential component of the system of care, it is the outcomes for children to which it contributes that make it all-important. Foster parents prepared with the knowledge to understand and the skills to respond to difficult behaviors do not call the agency to ask for the child’s removal. Children in these well-prepared homes experience greater stability in their already disrupted lives. When they stay put and do not change schools mid-year or -semester, greater progress is possible, as is the realization of their potential. When foster parents are adequately trained and supported, children like Mercedes do not die in foster care.

**Bill Grimm** is a senior attorney with the National Center for Youth Law specializing in Child Welfare. He has been lead counsel in several large cases seeking to reform child welfare systems, including Baltimore, Arkansas, Utah, and Washington.

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<sup>322</sup> Casey Family Programs, *Lighting the Way: Attracting and Supporting Foster Families* 25 (2000).