

"In order to achieve successful outcomes for foster children, collaboration among all stakeholders—including the court, social service agencies, health care providers, the education system, child advocacy groups, attorneys and the community—is imperative. Judges have the power and the mandate to bring stakeholders together around this critical issue." ~ Judge J. Dean Lewis, Editor

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Editor's Page— The Role of Foster Parents in the Dependency Court



J. Dean Lewis, Judge (retired), Former Member, National CASA Association Board of Directors and Past President, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

Summary

Judges must take a leadership role in bringing courts, child-serving agencies and communities together to provide foster family placements within the community that meet the needs of the children served.

When removing a child from a home in a dependency case, judges must ensure that the temporary placement provides for the child's safety and well-being while permanency is achieved in the shortest possible timeframe. When no appropriate family member is available—the situation in the majority of dependency cases—the court relies upon foster parents.

Judges look to social service agencies to provide foster families who are properly screened and appropriately trained to meet children's special needs while ensuring their safety. This is no simple task. Because communities are often not able to provide an adequate number of foster families, children often undergo the added trauma of being placed outside of their school districts and support systems. Or, they are placed in long-term care facilities where their special needs can be met.

Such circumstances reinforce the need for judges to take a leadership role in bringing courts, child-serving agencies and communities together to provide foster family placements within the community that meet the needs of the children served.

This issue of *The Judges' Page* is dedicated to understanding the role of foster parents in the dependency court system. Articles include the following:

- [Michael S. Piraino](#), CEO of National CASA, addresses the relationship between foster parents and CASA/GAL volunteers.
- The [National Foster Parent Association](#) provides services, support and training to state and local foster parent associations.
- [Former foster youth](#) share their thoughts on the role of foster parents.
- [Regina Deihl](#) addresses the expanding role and increasing status of foster parents.
- [Regina Deihl](#) explains the new federal law that requires foster parents be given an opportunity to be heard at dependency reviews and hearings.
- [Drs. Shannon Dorsey, Elizabeth Farmer, Elizabeth Thompson, and Julie Larrieu](#) explain why therapeutic foster care is an important option for some youth.
- [Shay Bilchik](#) points out the important role of foster parents when the child welfare and juvenile justice systems intersect.
- [Paula Campbell](#) offers online resources relative to the role of foster parents.
- [Judge Douglas Johnson](#) discusses the roles that foster parents and children can play in the courtroom.
- [Cindy Bizzell](#) announces the release of a new edition of the *National CASA Volunteer Training Curriculum*, which can help to educate foster parents about the court process.

As the unique mental health and educational issues of abused and neglected children are better understood, many communities have responded to the need for more extensive training and specialization of foster parents. Children who were once placed in group or institutional care are now nurtured in family settings offered by therapeutic foster home providers. Foster parents are also trained to meet the needs of medically fragile or sexually abused children and those with special needs such as autism.

What can judges do to ensure that skilled and committed foster families are available to meet the needs of the community's foster children?

- Exercise judicial leadership in making the community aware of the need for such families through public speaking opportunities.
- Sponsor court forums to educate the public and prospective foster parents of the dependency court process.
- Sponsor multi-discipline training on court process and procedures for all involved in the dependency court including foster parents.
- Encourage foster parents to attend all court hearings and participate actively in the reviews, and ensure that foster parents know their input will serve as a valuable component of the decision-making process.
- Show respect for the role of the foster parents in supporting the child through a very difficult process.
- Incorporate the court procedures recommendations of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (see "Back to Basics: Fundamental Application of the *Resource Guidelines and Adoption and Permanency Guidelines* in Child Abuse and Neglect Cases" - ncjfcj.org/content/blogcategory/369/438/). Recommendations that are particularly helpful to stakeholders—including foster parents—are timely scheduling of hearings, limited continuances and prompt permanency decisions.
- If ethically permissible, inform state and local lawmakers of the need for funding for foster parent recruitment and training, as well the need for subsidies to be paid to those foster parents who serve special needs children.

For all of these reasons, in order to achieve successful outcomes for foster children, collaboration and cooperation among all stakeholders, including the court, social service agencies, health care providers, the educational system, child advocacy groups, attorneys and the community is imperative. The judge has the power and the mandate to bring stakeholders together around this critical issue.

Additional Item of Interest: Supplement to Judges' Guide to be published in August.

Readers of *The Judges' Page* may recall that in 2004, the National CASA Association and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges cosponsored publication of *the Judges Guide to CASA/GAL Program Development*. Readers can access this document online at *The Judges' Page* homepage and on CASAnet.org, under "Guides and Manuals." Chapter 7 deals with the issue of judicial ethics. Judge Thomas E. Hornsby and his research assistant Ms. Keely Mccabe recently updated Chapter 7 and a supplement will be online by late August. Thanks to Judge Hornsby and Ms. Mccabe for their contributions.

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Making the Relationship Work for Children: Foster Parents and CASA/Guardian Ad Litem Volunteers

Michael S. Piraino, Chief Executive Officer, National CASA Association

Summary

The more volunteer advocates and foster parents understand and respect each other, the closer we will come to our shared vision of a safe, nurturing home for every child.

Foster parents and CASA or guardian ad litem volunteers have the same focus; the safety and well-being of children who are placed in out-of-home care. Our missions may be different—independent advocacy, as provided by CASA/GAL volunteers, and direct care and nurturing, as provided by foster parents. But our common focus means that, while volunteers and foster parents may not always agree, we serve children best when our relationship is respectful and mutually supportive.

It is difficult to get a clear handle on the state of the CASA/foster parent relationship. Anecdotes typically play a large role in how we feel about each other. Nationally, we believe foster parents need and deserve support for the often challenging roles they play in children's lives. Locally, there is some evidence that foster parents generally appreciate and benefit from our volunteers' work. In a survey that included foster parents, a large majority reported that the volunteers asked for and respected their opinions. These foster parents said that one of the greatest strengths of the CASA/GAL volunteers with whom they worked was their one-on-one involvement with the children.

The foster parents also reported many examples of how CASA/GAL volunteers helped the foster parents:

- Helping the foster parents navigate the child welfare system
- Keeping them informed about the status of the child's case
- Helping them understand their foster child's rights
- Providing consistency when child welfare workers changed
- Helping obtain needed services such as early childhood education
- Becoming a friend to the foster parent as well as the child
- Sharing information on the child's history that was helpful in dealing with behavior problems
- Working with the foster parents to get the child more quickly into an adoptive home
- Working with the foster parents to reunite siblings

Some case examples might illuminate this list. We are fortunate to have over 400 Native American volunteers. In one case, one of these volunteers was assigned to advocate for a sibling group of American Indian children who were placed with a non-native foster mother. The volunteer was able to help her better understand the various cultural aspects of the children's lives, enhancing the foster mother's relationship with the children and eventually creating supportive relationships for the children with extended family members.

One of the greatest benefits of a good CASA/foster parent relationship is better information sharing. One foster mother tells of siblings being dropped off at her home for what was supposed to be a few weeks of respite care. The CASA volunteer was "the first person that called me and took the time to explain the children and their history." As the weeks grew into months, this foster mother and the CASA volunteer continued to collaborate. The volunteer was able to help change the case plan to better target services to the children's father. When visits with the father did not work out, it was the CASA volunteer who accompanied the children back to the foster home—with a Happy Meal from McDonalds that helped ease the situation.

When children have major behavioral problems, CASA volunteers can be a strong and lasting source of support for foster parents. One such case involved a young child with severe emotional and medical problems. At one point, after working closely with the foster mother for four years, the CASA volunteer reported that the changes in the child were "absolutely amazing." That foster mother went on to adopt the child.

CASA and GAL volunteers can also help the foster parents in connection with court proceedings. Though foster parents may have certain rights with respect to the child welfare agency's actions, such as providing input into the permanency plan, they may have few rights and a limited ability to be heard in court proceedings. CASA volunteers can help ensure that the court does consider foster parent input. In a 2005 survey, judges indicated that CASA volunteers' contact with foster parents is very useful for judicial decision-making. One foster parent recently wrote to us about a court case where "CASA was there all the way defending the child and his bond to my family."

Beyond cooperating in specific cases, CASA and GAL volunteers (and the organizations that represent them) share a common interest in advocating for systemic changes that will make the children's lives better. Examples of these issues include foster care rates, adoption subsidies, training and support services for foster parents, and assistance to youth transitioning out of foster care.

Another concern we share is the educational rights and success of foster children. One of the national organizations with which we collaborate is the National Foster Parents Association (NFPA). Our missions mesh well. The National CASA Association mission statement says we support volunteers for children so that those children "can thrive in safe, permanent homes." The NFPA mission statement focuses on "safety, permanence and well-being for the children and youth." An example of our collaboration is our participation together on the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education.

These common interests help explain why there is also frequent crossover between fostering and volunteering with CASA. Many current and former foster parents are involved in CASA and volunteer guardian ad litem work. One of our former board presidents, for example, was a foster parent. Often, foster parents see volunteer advocacy as a logical extension of the commitment they made to children in their care. Their work with us allows them to feel they are broadening their impact on the child welfare system.

Advocating for the best interests of foster children can also mean advocating for better support for foster parents. Former foster children can become strong advocates for improved public support for foster parenting. Actress Victoria Rowell, through the Rowell Foster Children's Positive Plan, is promoting advocacy for foster children and better support for foster parents. Many former CASA children are interested in pursuing this as well.

The relationship between CASA volunteers and foster parents is not always as comfortable as we would all like. If we are doing our jobs well, we should expect times of disagreement. But even when we disagree, we can improve the relationship through open and honest communication. If foster parents have concerns, it is most helpful if those are raised early so they can be dealt with effectively. Both foster parents and CASA volunteers should recognize that they have related but different roles. Foster parents should expect CASA volunteers to solicit and respect their input, but to make an independent judgment based on all the information. On the volunteer side, it is crucial to understand the many pressures foster parents face, from agency requirements, to the stresses of caring for children who may have many special needs, to a lack of adequate resources.

Foster care is a crucial resource for some 800,000 children a year in the United States. The effectiveness of that resource depends in part on caring foster parents, who have the training and support they need. The more volunteer advocates and foster parents understand and respect each other, the closer we will come to our shared vision of a safe, nurturing home for every child.

This article originally appeared in the March/April 2007 issue of Fostering Families TODAY. It is reprinted with their permission.

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National Foster Parent Association Gives Foster Parents a Voice

Information supplied by Karen Jorgenson, Executive Director, National Foster Parent Association

Summary

The National Foster Parent Association supports foster parents in achieving safety, permanence and well-being for the children and youth in their care through efforts including advocacy and education.

The National Foster Parent Association (NFPA) is a non-profit, volunteer organization established in 1972 as a result of the concerns of several independent groups that felt the country needed a national organization to meet the needs of foster families in the United States. In August 1971, the Child Welfare League of America received a three-year grant to establish a national organization for foster parents. The league immediately established a foster parent project to begin creating the organization.

Today, NFPA has grown from an original group of 926 foster parents, 210 social workers and 59 other professionals to an organization that represents thousands of foster families nationwide through foster parent affiliates. NFPA serves as a national voice of foster parents. Its mission is to support foster parents in achieving safety, permanence and well-being for the children and youth in their care.

The association's primary objectives are to:

- Promote the delivery of services and support to foster families
- Support quality foster care by promoting excellence and best practices
- Provide services and support to state and local foster parent associations
- Promote positive image of family foster care
- Develop and provide education and training, information, dissemination of information to members and the public
- Advocate at the local, state and national levels; promote networking and collaboration

More than 1,000 foster parents and social workers each year participate in NFPA's educational conference. The national website (nfpainc.org) offers information about foster parenting, training and instructional materials, references and links to other child welfare sites. A directory of state foster parent associations is also provided.

Basic Rights of Foster Parents

The following basic rights are found on the National Foster Parent Association website (nfpainc.org) The website also provides links to state statutes addressing foster parent rights.

Foster Parents have the right to:

1. Be treated with consideration, respect for personal dignity and privacy
2. Be included as a valued member of the service team
3. Receive support services which assist in the care of the child in their home, including an open and timely response from agency personnel
4. Be informed of all information regarding the child that will impact their home or family life during the care of the foster child
5. Have input into the permanency plan for the child in their home
6. Assurance of safety for their family member(s)
7. Assistance in dealing with family loss and separation when a child leaves their home
8. Be informed of all agency policies and procedures that relate to their role as foster care giver
9. Receive training that will enhance their skills and ability to cope as foster care givers
10. Be informed of how to receive services and reach personnel on a 24-hour-a-day/7-day-a-week basis
11. Be granted a reasonable plan for relief from the role of foster care giver

12. Confidentiality regarding issues that arise in their foster family home
13. Not be discriminated against on the basis of religion, race, color, creed, sex, national origins, age or physical handicap
14. Receive evaluation and feedback on their role of foster care giver

Created April 1973

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Foster Youth Perspectives

Kiaya Combs and Maleah Truelove, Former foster youth

Summary

Thoughts about the important relationship between foster parents and the youth in their care from two former foster youth.

To think that foster parents are strictly filling an interim role—stepping in to provide short-term housing while a permanency plan is established and enacted—would be to underestimate their contributions to the lives of children in their care. The following thoughts—shared with National CASA staff by former foster youth—are just two examples of the important role that foster parents can play in children’s lives.



Kiaya, age 12, speaking of her foster home, which later became her adoptive home:

I met my new foster mom when I was in the hospital. She walked into my room with a really pretty blue princess dress in her hands for me, and I was really happy that I was getting something nice....At my new home, they gave me food I had never had before, like yogurt and strawberries. They took me to my very first park. They gave me a nice place to lay my head every night.

Maleah, age 26, reflecting on the highlights of her life, which include graduating from college and owning a home:

I am still part of my foster family—they are my mom and dad, not my “foster mom and dad.” I have a brother and sister; each of them has a child, and I am their aunt. I’m family. I don’t have to explain to anyone how I am family, I just am. And it will always be that way, because they love me.



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Foster Caregiver Role Changes as Status Expands

Regina Deihl, Director and Co-founder, Legal Advocates for Permanent Parenting

Summary

Enhancements in the legal status of foster caregivers, creation of independent foster parent advocacy organizations, and integration of caregivers in the decision-making process are improving the roles of foster parents.

In the past, foster parents and relative caregivers were viewed as temporary way stations for children suffering from abuse, neglect or abandonment. Caregivers were often dissuaded from establishing close, personal relationships with their foster children since the bond between a caregiver and child was often viewed as insignificant in the child's life. As our understanding of the importance of children's attachments to caring adults has grown, so has our appreciation of the relationship between caregiver families and their foster and kin children. Research on brain development and the developmental needs of children—as well as on the importance of stability and permanency in the lives of youth—is changing the way the legal system views foster and kinship caregivers.

Legal Status Options for Foster Caregivers

In addition to the right to be heard in proceedings held about their foster children under the Safe and Timely Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006, caregivers have other legal status options in many states. Although they do not have appointed counsel in any state, and there are almost no resources available to provide them with legal information or advice, foster and kinship parents are increasingly looking for ways to access the court.

Most states have provisions for foster parents or relative caregivers to obtain party status in dependency cases. Requesting party status as an “intervenor,” “interested person” or “de facto parent” has become increasingly popular among foster caregivers. In some states, foster parents have a statutory right to party status after a period of time has elapsed. In Colorado, foster parents who have had a child in their care for more than three months may intervene in a dependency case as a matter of right once an adjudication of abuse or neglect has taken place¹. In Hawaii, foster parents are entitled by statute to participate in all court hearings as a party, and no hearing can take place until the foster parents are served with notice².

Courts typically take a variety of factors into consideration when determining whether a caregiver meets the criteria for party status, including the time period the child has resided with the foster parent, the foster parent's knowledge of the child that may assist the court, the foster parent's assumption of parenting duties, the nature of the relationship between the foster parent and the child, whether the foster parent is also caring for the child's sibling and the best interest of the child.

Other legal status options are emerging for caregiver families. California recently enacted legislation that establishes a new category of caregivers called “court-ordered prospective adoptive parents.” Under this statutory provision, after termination of parental rights has occurred, a child welfare agency may not remove a child from the caregiver's home without giving the child, his or her attorney and the prospective adoptive parents an opportunity for a court hearing regarding the proposed change in placement, except in an emergency situation. Since caregivers do not have attorneys to advise them to seek the status, the provision attaches if the caregiver has already requested designation from the court as a prospective adoptive parent or is eligible to request court designation as a prospective adoptive parent.

Foster Caregiver Bills of Rights

Nearly a third of the states have also enacted foster parent rights provisions in their statutory schemes. Most states' bills of rights have some common provisions (e.g. rights to certain information about children placed in the home, participation in some form of decision-making about the child, notice of a change in placement and some form of grievance procedure). Implementation of these rights remains inconsistent and some caregivers have expressed concerns about how to enforce rights granted in statute.

Organization of Foster Caregivers

Foster caregivers are increasingly organizing in an attempt to gain the political power necessary to address needed policy changes. In Washington State, foster parents recently joined the Washington State Federation of Employees, a unionized effort to “advocate for adequate resources, training, accountability and common sense policies to benefit foster children in our state.”

Agency and Court Integration of Caregivers in Decision-Making

Both child welfare agencies and family court systems are increasingly concerned about the declining numbers of foster caregivers available for placement of abused and neglected children. Research from the federal Office of the Inspector General and the National Center for State Legislatures indicates that foster parents’ number one reason for leaving the system is frustration with their lack of input into decision-making about the children in their homes. Agencies and courts are beginning to take a more active role in encouraging participation in decision-making processes by foster and kinship caregivers, actions which will hopefully lead to an increase in the number of quality adults available for placement of children in foster care.

Footnotes:

¹ CRS 19-3-507(5).

² HRS 587-51.5.

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New Federal Law Strengthens Role of Foster Caregivers in Court

Regina Deihl, Director and Co-founder, Legal Advocates for Permanent Parenting

Summary

Foster and kinship parents are critical sources of information for judges who make decisions about children in foster care. Increased participation in court proceedings not only improves judicial decision-making, but allows the court to assess the caregiver's commitment to the child's well-being.

Foster parents and relative caregivers who spend their days and nights caring for children in foster care often have important information for the judges who make decisions about children's futures. Yet, in most states, no one had to notify these caregivers about court hearings for the children until late 1997 when the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) was signed into law. Congress recently strengthened the federal statutory language giving caregivers court access in the Safe and Timely Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006, P.L. 109-239. Under the new statute, foster parents, relative caregivers and pre-adoptive parents have a right to participate in any proceeding about the children in their homes. Modifications to the federal *Child Welfare Policy Manual*, disseminated by the US Department of Health and Human Services on January 29, 2007, add that they must "at a minimum, be provided with notice of their right to be heard in all permanency hearings, as well as six-month reviews, if held by the court."

Additionally, the federal statute now requires that all states receiving federal court improvement funds institute a court rule mandating that foster, kinship and pre-adoptive parents be notified of any court proceeding affecting their foster children. The law became effective October 1, 2006, except in states where legislation is needed to implement the new requirements. In those states, the effective date will be delayed until state law is amended.

Research on Caregiver Participation in Court Hearings

Foster, kinship, and pre-adoptive parents are logical court participants. They are in a unique position to supply courts with first-hand details about foster children's well-being due to daily care of the children. Research conducted by the California Administrative Office of the Courts indicates that many foster parents want to and will attend court proceedings if given training and encouragement to do so. Caregivers who attended court hearings perceived the experience as positive, and were appreciative of the opportunity to share with the court their perceptions about a child in their care. Those who received training about effective court participation retained court knowledge over time and experienced a greater sense of efficacy and involvement in their foster children's lives.

Judges who were interviewed for the study asserted that they definitely want to receive information from children's caregivers, particularly details that can humanize the children and help the court better assess their needs and the quality of their day-to-day lives. The study revealed that caregiver court participation can positively affect judicial decision-making and, ultimately, the welfare of children in foster care¹.

Legal Information and Training for Caregivers

Several issues have arisen for courts in implementing federal mandates requiring court access by children's caregivers. In order to appropriately participate in court, foster parents and relatives caring for children need information on court processes and procedures as well as specific information about how to relay information about the child to the court. (Information on training foster and kinship caregivers about court participation and other legal issues is available from Legal Advocates for Permanent Parenting at LAPPonline.org).

Standardized Court Forms

A few states have standard formats for providing information about dependent children to courts. California, for example, has a series of standardized court forms that permit caregivers to provide information to the court. (See California's *Caregiver Information Form (JV-290)* at courinfo.ca.gov/forms/documents/jv290.pdf available in five languages). Recently enacted legislation requires that a blank Caregiver Information Form and an accompanying instruction sheet be provided with the notice of hearing to children's caregivers in California.

Rules of Court

The new federal statute requires each state to have a court rule in place to ensure that caregivers receive notice of any court proceeding to be held with respect to the child in the caregiver's home. Rules of court should address the caregiver's right to be heard "at any proceeding," requirements for filing written statements with the court, and provisions to ensure counsel is timely served with any written document filed by the caregiver. Since caregivers typically are not represented by counsel, court clerks may take responsibility to serve counsel and file a proof of service with the court.

Access to Court Information

Few states allow foster and kinship caregivers access to court information about their foster children unless the caregiver obtains party status. Caregivers with party status usually have increased access to court records, although jurisdictions vary in practice and few address the issue in statute. As a result, questions regarding access to agency reports and court records, including access to information about the caregiver's home in court files, remain unanswered.

Foster and kinship parents are critical sources of information for judges who make decisions about children in foster care. Increased participation in court proceedings not only improves judicial decision-making, but allows the court to assess the caregiver's commitment to the child's well-being. Judges that encourage caregivers to participate in hearings find the first-hand information they receive from foster and kinship parents invaluable to understanding the child's experience and needs in foster care.

Footnotes:

¹ Deihl, R., Martin, M. & Nuñez, S. *Caregivers and the Courts: Improving Court Decisions Affecting Children in Foster Care* (San Francisco, Center for Families, Children and the Courts, 2002).

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Therapeutic Foster Care: A Viable Option for Treating Youth in Families and in the Community

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Summary

Research demonstrates that some forms of Therapeutic Foster Care offer a promising option for children and adolescents with behavioral, emotional and mental health problems.

Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) is also known by other names, including therapy foster care, treatment foster care, specialist foster care, treatment-foster family care and multidimensional treatment foster care. It is considered to be the least restrictive treatment-based residential option for children and adolescents with behavioral, emotional and mental health problems.

In TFC, youth are placed with treatment parents who receive training and supervision/consultation to enable them to manage youths' difficult, aggressive and delinquent behaviors. Along the continuum of mental health services (e.g., home-based, outpatient therapy, day treatment), TFC is usually considered after child and adolescent problems have escalated to a point where residential or out-of-home interventions are necessary. TFC presents a less restrictive and less costly alternative to standard out-of-home interventions (e.g., residential treatment, hospitalization, group home) and has remained an attractive treatment option because it allows youth to be maintained in a community- and family-based setting.

TFC is distinct from other community-based residential placements. First, unlike regular foster care, it explicitly focuses on treatment, provides substantial training and supervision for treatment parents and views these trained treatment parents as front-line practitioners rather than parent substitutes. Second, unlike congregate care, it places youth in individual families' homes and limits the number of youth in each home to allow for individualized treatment, attention and supervision. In many communities, it is viewed as a valuable but scarce resource that offers higher levels of treatment than regular foster care, provides for intensive treatment and opportunities for positive development and avoids the potentially negative influence of grouping youth with behavioral difficulties together in congregate care.

When compared to other community-based treatments, TFC has promising evidence-based outcomes (Chamberlain, 1994, 2002; Farmer, Dorsey, & Mustillo, 2004). Much of this evidence comes from research by Patricia Chamberlain and colleagues on their model of TFC, Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC). mtfc.com/. The evidence indicates that compared to youth placed in other residential settings, those placed in MTFC show more rapid improvements in behaviors such as aggressive and conduct-related problems, are more likely to be discharged to less-restrictive placements (including their own families), better maintain stability of their living situation and are less likely to be involved in criminal activity or to be incarcerated. A number of these differences appear to be maintained over time.

Due to both the promise of TFC and the attractiveness of maintaining youth in the community in a family setting, TFC has been widely disseminated. There are TFC programs in nearly every state.

Some TFC delivered in community settings is not as intensive or clearly defined as Chamberlain's MTFC model. Chamberlain's MTFC is a closely supervised and relatively short-term model of TFC (e.g., approximately six months). It includes: 1) intense training, support, and supervision of foster parents (both pre-service and in-service); 2) close supervision of youth and minimized association with deviant peers (only one youth is placed in each TFC home); 3) proactive, structured behavior management (individualized points and level system); 4) weekly therapy and skill-building; and 5) family therapy with the youth's aftercare placement (e.g., family to which the child will return).

The intensity of training, support, and supervision of foster parents distinguishes MTFC from other types of TFC. Foster parents are required to attend weekly meetings, have a daily call with MTFC staff to monitor youth behavior, have 24-hour access to their supervisor, and receive in-home coaching on how to manage difficult behaviors and improve pro-social behaviors. According to the developers, one of the most important aspects of

MTFC's success is this "on the job" training, coaching and supervision. The support of ongoing, round-the-clock consultation when needed also contributes to MTFC's success. In other models of TFC, most training is done prior to placement and regular, on the job coaching occurs less frequently. To fill apparent gaps in both MTFC and other models, some researchers have recommended adding both trauma-focused treatment and formal preparation for adulthood (Farmer, Murray, & Dorsey, 2006).

What else makes MTFC so effective? Relationships appear to be important, particularly the relationships between the TFC supervisor and the TFC parent and between the TFC parent and the youth. The relationship of the TFC supervisor with the TFC parent can model the respect and warmth desired to be displayed between the TFC parent and the youth. In addition, close supervision of youth-peer associations was related to positive outcomes.

TFC offers an important option for treating and managing youth behavior and mental health problems, but there is likely some variation in TFC programs. When evaluating programs, it is important for court personnel to focus on: 1) ongoing, specific training (particularly coaching of intervention delivery) for TFC parents that goes beyond certification requirements; 2) close supervision and contact between supervisors and TFC parents; 3) TFC supervisors' ability to develop/guide behavioral interventions; and, when appropriate, 4) addressing previous trauma; and 5) preparing youth for transition to adulthood.

Citations:

Chamberlain, P. (2002) Treatment foster care. In B.J. Burns & K. Hoagwood (Eds.), *Community treatment for youth: Evidence-based interventions for severe emotional and behavioral disorders* (pp. 117-138). New York: Oxford University Press.

Chamberlain, P., Reid JB. (1994) Differences in risk factors and adjustment for male and female delinquents in treatment foster care. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 3: 23-39.

Farmer, EMZ, Dorsey, S., & Mustillo, SA. (2004) Intensive home and community interventions. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*. Vol. 13 (4), pp. 857-884.

Farmer, EMZ, Murray, M., & Dorsey, S. (2006) Enhancing and adapting treatment foster care. *A system of care for children's mental health: expanding the research base. Annual conference proceedings*. pp. 55 – 64.

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The Role of Foster Parents When the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems Intersect

Shay Bilchik, Research Professor/Center Director, Georgetown University Public Policy Institute Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and Systems Integration

Summary

When foster youth are taken into the juvenile justice system, foster parents have a continuing role to play and should be encouraged and supported to maintain their critically important role in the life of the child in their care.

Each day individuals from every walk of life do the extraordinary: take children who have been abused or neglected and need a safe haven into their homes. As foster parents they provide for the children's safety and well being for days and sometimes years, introducing some sense of stability into fragile lives. It sounds simple but is the most important, courageous and potentially life-saving work in which these individuals can engage.

The children who come into their care have been exposed—at best—to some form of neglect and—at worst—to multiple forms of violence. They often bring with them symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as a history of school related problems, an unstable family life and a lack of consistent positive peer relationships. These three anchors—family, school and peers—are necessary for children to experience a safe and nurturing childhood. We rely on foster parents both to serve as a safe haven and to help a child begin the healing process and reconnect to these anchors. Foster parents don't assume this challenge alone, but do play a significant role in beginning to change the norms in a child's life and build their trust in the world around them.

Child welfare systems across the country are replete with success stories that involve the life-altering impact of a foster parent. In some instances the journey, even when ending happily, is a difficult one. Disruptive and violent behavior, truancy and school failure, running away and self-harm are often the symptoms of the damage that has been done in their young lives.

In more extreme situations, children and youth in foster care may require special services or end up in the juvenile justice system. It is at these times that we are most challenged to maintain the course and work creatively and strategically to avoid the possibility of a young person spiraling out of control.

This phenomenon happens every day. When children in the foster care system are arrested, they are labeled as delinquents and their cases are taken over by the delinquency system. It should not be this way, nor does it have to be. I suggest that foster parents have a continuing role to play—even at this point of engagement with the justice system—and should be encouraged and supported to maintain their important role in the life of the child in their care. Sticking by a child gives the foster parent a special role in that child's life: that of someone who did not turn away from the child when the going got tough.

How can we build on the incredible demonstration of love and kindness offered by foster parents who take their commitment to the children in their care seriously and ask only for the support of the system that is charged with the care of the children who they have taken into their homes? We start by building the capacity of foster parents by providing them with the wrap-around services they need. We mandate, as has been done in some jurisdictions, that every child who is arrested while in foster care benefits from a multi-system response in which the child welfare and juvenile justice systems work together to determine why a particular child is not succeeding and then mobilize their collective efforts to prevent them from penetrating further into the juvenile justice system. We then marshal the resources necessary to enable foster parents to provide for that child's safety and well-being, including success in school, positive connections to family and exposure to positive peers.

We know that being a foster parent means being there for a child who has been abused or neglected. I suggest that it also means showing up at a detention hearing to avoid the "detention bias" children in foster care experience and, when appropriate, taking them "home." However, I am also suggesting that it means that our child welfare and juvenile justice systems also must "show up" to work in concert with one another and match the extraordinary efforts made by this country's army of foster parents. Our children in foster care and the foster parents who serve them deserve no less.

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Online Resources

Paula Campbell, Permanency Planning for Children Department, NCJFCJ

Summary

A listing of resources on topics including training, resources, foster parent associations and foster parent rights.

Training and Resources

Casey Family Programs offers many publications and resources for foster parents.

casey.org/Resources/

The Oregon Social Learning Center is a collaborative, multidisciplinary research center dedicated to increasing the scientific understanding of social and psychological processes related to healthy development and family functioning. Site contains articles on enhancing foster parenting skills.

oslc.org/index.html

The Child Welfare Information Gateway has a list of resources for foster parents and other stakeholders to access for information and guidance.

childwelfare.gov/highlights/foster_parent/

Foster Care and Adoptive Community website offers articles, advice, chat boards and online trainings for foster parents.

fosterparents.com/articles/fosterparent.htm

National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work, in collaboration with the Child Welfare League of America and the National Indian Child Welfare Association, is a training, technical assistance and information services organization dedicated to help strengthen the capacity of state, local, tribal and other publicly administered or supported child welfare agencies.

hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/index.html

Foster Parent Organizations and Associations

National Foster Parent Association website offers a wealth of resources that support foster parents. This site also features the names and contact information for state foster parent associations.

nfpainc.org/

First Home Care website is devoted to providing information on foster care best practices, legislative updates and other important information.

fhcweb.absfirst.com/index.htm

Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association offers publications, networking, and fundraising ideas that can be duplicated for other state foster parent association websites.

www.ifapa.org/

Casey Family Services website for families and communities

caseyfamilyservices.org/index.php

Publications and Articles

A Literature Review Comparing the Outcomes of Residential Group Care and Therapeutic Foster Care (October 2001), *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 5

springerlink.com/content/q240km98hv627346/

Voice, a magazine for foster parents from Casey Family Programs, Winter/Spring 2007, Vol. 8, Issue 1

caseyfamilyservices.org/pdfs/winter_07_voice.pdf

The Effectiveness of Therapeutic Foster Care for the Prevention of Violence (February 2005), *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Vol. 28, Issue 2, Supplement 1

http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6VHT-4FDM90N-6&_user=1450828&_coverDate=02%2F28%2F2005&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&_view=c&_acct=C000052773&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=1450828&md5=8e8170098b8c240e583e4c53a1be67c6

(Article available for purchase.)

Foster Parent Rights

Foster Parent Bill of Rights, Casey Family Programs

nysccc.org/Foster_Parent_Rights/CaseyFPrights.pdf

Legal Advocates for Permanent Planning lists the Foster Parent Bill of Rights used by San Mateo County, California.

lapponline.org/Resources/SMBillofRights.htm

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Foster Parent Rights and Responsibilities

www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/be_FosterRights.asp

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Rights and Responsibilities of Foster Parents in the Courtroom



*Douglas F. Johnson, Treasurer,
National Council of Juvenile and
Family Court Judges*

Summary

A new federal law mandating that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and kinship caregivers receive notice of hearings and have a right to be heard in proceedings involving a foster child in their care could lead to more informed judges and better outcomes for children.

The Safe and Timely Placement of Foster Children, P.L. 109-239, amended the language of 42 U.S.C. Chapter 675 (5) 2006 to mandate that state courts give foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relatives providing care for foster children “notice of hearings and a right to be heard” in any proceeding involving a foster child. Each state must enact a court rule or statute to comply with the new federal law. After speaking with judges throughout the country, I learned that a few of our colleagues are quite negative about this new law. Most are pleased. Others do not know what to expect. So, what does the new role of the foster parent mean to judges who hear abuse and neglect cases?

Foster parents offer judges their daily eyes and ears as they provide a home for a foster child. No one else in the system can say that they live with the foster child. The rest of us learn about the foster child second-hand. CASA volunteers come the closest to a foster parent’s insight in terms of regular contact and speaking up for the foster child. But foster parents truly stand in lieu of the biological parent by providing daily care, nurture and love.

Foster parents need ongoing training about their role. Letting go of a child who is being reunited with his or her biological parent may well cause grief and separation anxiety—especially if that foster parent wanted to adopt the child. Concurrent planning for reunification and adoption is necessarily a schizophrenic concept. When reunification is uncertain and questionable, we simultaneously plan for adoption. Prolonged foster care adds to the expectation of the foster-adoptive parent that adoption is likely. How many times have we seen the foster-adoptive parent’s tears when the child is removed and sent back home? Proper training about permanency planning will help prepare the foster-adoptive parent for this type of loss. But we must do more. Grief counseling, therapeutic visitation and transition time must be provided for the well-being of both the foster child and the foster parent.

At any proceeding, a foster parent can tell the judge about how a child is doing in a myriad ways. A foster parent knows what a child likes to eat (or not!), how school is going—both academically and socially—activities in which the child participates, and how the child feels about his parent, himself and the foster placement. A foster parent knows whether a parent is regularly visiting with his or her child. A foster parent knows how a child reacts before and after a visit or when a parent fails to show up for visitation. Foster parents bring children to medical and therapeutic appointments. Foster children experience the stability of mature, caring and consistent parenting from foster parents.

Judges, this new law can help you make better decisions about the best interests of a child who has been placed into foster care because of parental abuse or neglect. Any negative experience regarding foster parents usually boils down to a training issue. Judges can help train foster parents just like they do with all the others who come to court. Can there be a bad apple? Sure, but that can be properly addressed the same as with any other player in court. If a foster parent is sabotaging or undermining reunification efforts, the judge can find that the foster placement is not in the best interests of the child and remove the child. I have had to do this on occasion. I suspect many of you have too. Additionally, Health and Human Services licenses these foster placements and has the duty to provide proper oversight and input. CASA volunteers, guardians ad litem and foster care review board members can also provide oversight and information to help make appropriate decisions regarding out-of-home placement.

It is very helpful to have age-appropriate foster children brought to court so that they can speak to us judges. Some are very articulate and others are not for a variety of reasons. Other important persons advocate and speak up on behalf of the child, including CASA volunteers and guardians ad litem. However, if you want first-hand

information regarding how a child fares in his or her daily world of foster care, ask the foster parent. In Nebraska, we are working on an optional checklist form for foster parents to fill out in advance of hearings. It will be offered just as any other evidence. Of course, I will still ask the foster parents for their comments regarding the well-being of a child.

If you still have reservations, try to help shape the process by participating in training, and give feedback as the new law is implemented. One thing is clear, regardless of one's view, the law of the land is that foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relatives providing care to foster children have the right to be heard in any proceeding involving a foster child.

Note: Click here to read (nationalcasa.org/download/Judges_Page/0707_nebraska_legislative_bill_457_0119.pdf) Nebraska Legislative Bill 457 mandating that a caregiver information form is developed and given to foster parents, foster-adopt parents, kinship care providers or guardians.

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National CASA Association Releases New Edition of the *National CASA Volunteer Training Curriculum*

Cindy Bizzell, Judicial Branch Education Manager, State of North Carolina, and National CASA Curriculum Advisory Committee Member

Summary

The new edition of the *National CASA Volunteer Training Curriculum* will enhance volunteers' preparation, strengthen their advocacy skills and could deepen foster parents' understanding of the juvenile court system.

The National CASA Association recently released a new edition of its *Volunteer Training Curriculum*. CASA/GAL volunteers benefit because they participate in state-of-the-art training which incorporates various media that will illustrate their roles and responsibilities in several ways. CASA/GAL programs and staff benefit because they have a set of training materials and resources at their disposal which have been designed to increase the professionalism and credibility of their training initiatives. Children benefit because well-trained CASA/GAL volunteers bridge gaps between children's needs and family and agency resources that meet those needs. Communities benefit because well-trained volunteers ensure that a community's standards for the protection and care of its children are upheld. Judges benefit because well-trained CASA/GAL volunteers present recommendations to court that are thoroughly researched, fact-based, represent the best interest of the child, and help the judge make the most well-informed decision.

CASA/GAL volunteers range in age from retirees to independent "Gen X-ers" to today's multi-tasking, tech-savvy "Millennials." Regardless of their generational influences, they all look for up-to-date comprehensive training and resources that will support them as they put their creativity and experience to work on behalf of children. The new edition of the CASA curriculum does just that. Its content provides the foundation for effective child advocacy and serves as a resource long after volunteers have been sworn in and are taking cases. Its media includes a CD of supplemental resource materials and a DVD of short autobiographical films created by foster care youth. Its learning activities are designed to cater to how adults learn best and appeal to diverse learning styles. Its updated case studies introduce situations and questions volunteers will face in their work. Its design allows volunteers to practice all of the components of their role during training sessions.

The development and production of high quality training for CASA/GAL volunteers is essential to the fulfillment of the National CASA Association's mission: to support and promote court-appointed volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children so that they can thrive in safe, permanent homes.

CASA/GAL volunteers bring the cases of thousands of children to life for judges across the country each day. The new edition of the *National CASA Volunteer Training Curriculum* will enhance volunteers' preparation and strengthen their advocacy skills as well as deepen foster parents' understanding of the juvenile court system. To learn more about the new volunteer training materials, call Brian Washburn, training director, 1-800-628-3233, ext. 238.

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