

**Idaho Department of Health & Welfare—Family and Community Services**  
**2013 Statewide Assessment of Resource Parent Recruitment and Retention**

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this statewide assessment was to obtain updated information about current practices involving resource parent recruitment and retention. The assessment focused on strengths, barriers, and ideas to improve outcomes, such as stability for children in foster care, timely reunification, foster care re-entries and retaining trained, qualified and experienced foster homes.

**Participants:** A broad range of individuals participated in either a facilitated solution-focused group discussion or an individual interview. Specific questions were developed geared toward the expertise of the person(s) being interviewed. Groups of the following individuals were interviewed: (1) Program Managers and Chiefs of Social Work; (2) Licensing supervisors, social workers and Regional Recruitment Coordinators; (3) Resource Parents and Resource Peer Mentors (RPM) and (4) local VISTA's and Navigators.

Participants included 9 resource parents from the North Hub; 15 resource parents from the West Hub; and 28 resource parents from the East Hub. Participants varied in experience from those who had just started the licensing process, newly licensed, licensed for a couple of years and seasoned resource parents that have been licensed for over ten years. In addition, resource parent feedback from Rob, Cameron and Miren's statewide listening tour was also included.

During this assessment feedback about the One Church One Child of Idaho program was also solicited to gather current feedback regarding implementation of the program; strengths, what is working and barriers. Please refer to specific Hub assessments for further information.

**Data Review and Results:** Data from 2011-2013 was reviewed on then current resource parents as well as those with a closed license. Data elements included: name; placement limitations; number of children currently placed in the home; age and gender of child(ren) preferred for placement; length of license; whether the family was foster only, adopt only, foster/ adopt or respite only; and the reason for ending of a license. While reviewing the elements, it was noted that some of the data variables are not being consistently and/or accurately recorded in iCARE. For instance, specific information regarding foster parents' preferences as well as the child's age and gender are not always identified in iCARE.

- Relative and fictive-kin placements continue to trend upward as a result of actively searching for relatives in the early stages and throughout a case. However, iCARE currently does not count fictive-kin placement as relatives;
- The number of children placed in foster care has decreased 16.8%, which is twice the rate of the decline in licensed foster homes (8.7%). The average number of licensed foster homes in 2011 was 1438; July 2013 it was 1239;
- In 2013, 293 families were newly licensed and approximately 465 family licenses were closed. Information as to why a family chose to close their license is not routinely recorded and reviewed for trends.

## **Recommendations on Resource Parent Recruitment and Retention**

Similar to the last 2 decades, we continue to experience the perpetual statewide crisis resulting from a limited number and diversity of resource families. This is confirmed by our below standard placement stability outcomes which are often characterized by placement in an available home rather than the most appropriate home for the child. There were also reports of children waiting in our offices an entire day while a placement is being sought. Siblings are often still separated due to lack of homes that can take the entire sibling group and American Indian children continue to be placed in non-Indian families. Children are being placed in residential care because of inadequate resources in the community. Had it not been for the recent decrease in foster care entries, the current situation would likely have been even more critical.

Over the years we have spent a great deal of money and energy on resource family recruitment, with limited results. We have not invested in the retention of the skilled, trained, licensed families we have. As part of our CFSR/Program Improvement Plans we have recognized this need, but quickly lost our commitment to retention efforts such as Bridging the Gap and recently dropping retention efforts from the RPM contract. Retention is something we as FACS staff have responsibility for. When asked, resource parents give us the same feedback over and over. We need to value them in this role by listening and taking action. Listening to the voices of these assessment participants makes one thing painfully clear – we, as an agency, need to re-anchor ourselves to the very foundation upon which child welfare practice is based – relationships. We need to extend our family centered practice principles to our resource families if we are going to have any hope of retaining the skilled families that we have recruited, trained and licensed.

We continue to cycle through families through a revolving door, believing that if someone, other than us, would only recruit more and better families, our problems would be solved. The key to breaking through this perpetual crisis is committing, at every level of the agency, to change our culture, that is, make changes in the way we think, value and treat resource families. This is really about getting back to the basics of family centered practice and customer service as we truly partner with our resource families. We must commit to ensuring the establishment of relationships built upon trust, respect, and transparency with our resource families.

### **Areas and Ideas for Improvement**

#### **Customer Service 101 -Respect and Support**

- Get to back to our core Family Centered Practice basics of treating resource families as a true partner of the agency by including their voices/perspectives in case planning/decision making, and taking the time to listen first to understand, providing consistent accurate information regarding process/policy if it differs pending the circumstances ensure we are explaining the “why.”
- Increasing hours for our Resource Peer Mentors to provide support to families during and after initial placement.

- Ongoing focus on culturally sensitive recruitment (American Indian, Hispanic and faith-based organizations), ensuring our informational meetings are also culturally sensitive, which may include offering a Spanish Informational meeting or collaborating with the tribes to provide informational meetings.
- Look at the availability to implement services for resource families (behavioral interventionist, parent training, etc.).

### **Responsiveness**

- Improve basic customer service skills such as returning phone calls, providing vouchers when appropriately requested and responding to their requests and needs.
- Responsiveness to inquiries (foster care and adoption) and throughout the licensing process, engaging families during the recruitment process and supporting them preparing them for placement.

### **Training**

- Re-evaluate the effectiveness of PRIDE and availability in rural parts of the state (video conferencing).
- Provide opportunities for our resource families to receive training specific to working with children and families who've experienced trauma (Child Welfare Trauma Training), such as Connected Child curriculum, behavioral intervention, discipline, Foster Parent College (access online). Provide information regarding CEU's for resource parents available online to fit in their schedule.

### **Teaming/Coordinating Efforts**

- Critically examine office culture including behavior and attitudes toward resource parents; consider re-exploration of the value and purpose of Bridging the Gap and continue with implementation.
- Create a safe environment for resource parents (and workers) to voice their concerns. Normalize the importance of feedback. Encourage resource families to insist on being heard, even if that means going up the "chain of command".
- Provide opportunities for resource parents to network (meet and greet with seasoned foster parents during first session of PRIDE; graduation ceremony at the end of PRIDE with staff involvement to provide an opportunity to meet and greet and welcome foster parents).
- Support and encourage resource parents' participation in support groups. This includes ensuring we are providing child care.
- Ensure resource families are obtaining the necessary information to care for the children (ensure they are involved in and getting resource family plans, child service plans, alternate care plans, child social medial forms).

- Consult with foster parents when determining visitation schedules, doctor appointments etc.
- Increase social worker’s understanding around confidentiality, specific to “need to know” as this is viewed differently across the state.
- Help build and support relationships between birth and resource families by creating opportunities for resource families and birth families to talk to each other about the children in care.
  - Quality/meaningful icebreakers (additional coaching and training for social workers and resource parents) facilitated by assigned social worker(s) (safety assessor and case manager); ensure these continue to occur when a child is moved to a new home;
- Ensure resource families are adequately prepared for and participate in FGDMs.
- Explore ways to improve teaming process and communication among social workers (i.e. communicating and involving licensing worker before a disruption, case transfer teaming process), implementation of improved teaming across all social workers.
- Ensure social workers are continuing with regular, frequent and meaningful visitation with resource families and children.
  - Provide additional training regarding assessing resource family’s needs and identifying red flags for potential disruption—Family Development Plans.
  - Ensure social workers have the information necessary to provide consistent information to resource parents, understand process for Level 3 approval, supportive services for resource parents i.e. grief counseling.
  - Ensure social workers are coaching resource parents around visitation between children and birth family (modifying visitation from supervised to monitored and asking resource parents to facilitate visitation).
- Educate and engage the community: think outside the box (open houses, run stories in local newspaper/news about successes of reunification w/ siblings or family members as a result of the support resource families provide).

### **Organizational Improvements**

- Implement Exit Surveys and consider yearly surveys to allow resource parents the opportunity to provide feedback. This includes responding to the feedback, valuing the feedback and looking for and implementing opportunities for improvement.
- Streamline a statewide policy specific to the use and payment of respite; ensure the use of respite is supported by the agency.
- Streamline consistency of use/approval of vouchers across the state and look at more conventional options for vouchers, i.e. VISA check card.
- Review licensing process to ensure this is completed effectively and efficiently (limit barriers, duplication of work when we can focus on gathering the information through our assessment/home visit with the potential family).
- Assess the current PRIDE model to determine if it is the best model to meet the needs of our current pool of resource parents and if it is aligned with our current best practice.

- Provide some examples and prompting to assist in the application process, specific to the autobiography and references. Specifically, include in the application bulleted concepts that would assist potential families in successfully writing their own autobiography.
- Streamline the process for accessing and obtaining child care for foster children and recertification.
- Staff retention activities and ongoing skill development.

## East Hub Resource Parent Recruitment & Retention Themes

The following feedback was obtained through the focus groups and participant interviews.

### Strengths

- PRIDE: a session was held in the Salmon area and they are currently working on setting up a weekend session in Region 6.
- Family Development Plans are being completed (not consistently across the Hub).
- Appears to have quite a bit of staff participation in PRIDE (Region 6).
- Resource parents are receiving notification of court hearings.
- Resource Parents are participating in some FGDMs depending on the case and circumstances.
- According to resource parents, when social workers practice from Family Centered Practice and implement the “team approach” it works well and resource parents feel supported.
- The embedded trainer assists with providing in-home support to resource families (Region 6 & 7).
- OCOC program has assisted with retention for resource parents (Region 7).
- There is a consensus among resource families on the importance of working with and mentoring birth families (Region 7).

### Barriers

- Licensing Process: process is too lengthy (6-9 months); inquiries may not always be responded to in timely manner, calls through 2-1-1 are not always able to provide information upon initial inquiry (Region 6); Region 6 licensing staff are asked to enter information in WebX for RPM’s and EWU.
- Application: assistance around completing the autobiography (providing an example or bullets to guide applicants); the autobiography is a running field, applicant cannot review entire entry; references not being submitted timely might be helpful to provide examples of what looking for from the referent; medical reference not completed/received timely holding up finalization of home study (integrity of medical exam is questionable if they are not completed by the resource parent’s primary physician).
- Trainings—PRIDE accessibility regarding locations and times needs to be expanded; realistic schedules to meet need of variety of applicants (shift schedules); child care not always provided; and the drive time from rural communities are barriers. Some resource parents indicate they don’t feel PRIDE is “helpful” and would have rather read the binder and do homework than participate in the classroom setting. Resource parents also reported they wish PRIDE portrayed the reality of foster care. They don’t feel like there is time for discussion and to ask questions; have to stay on track.
- Placement support/matching RPM’s need more hours to support after the first couple placements or if the family is struggling with a difficult placement; concerned some case



workers are not in support of the RPM program and RPM's don't want to step on case managers toes. Resource parents don't feel like they are getting the support when they have difficult placements.

- Resource Parent Support Groups: attendance can be challenging due to the time and no child care; some resource families have a misconception of the purpose due to the name; and resource parents have indicated they do not feel social workers support the attendance of support groups. Resource parents indicated networking has been discouraged due to "confidentiality" reasons (Region 7).
- Customer Service: resource parents indicate they are not receiving returned phone calls timely; there is limited communication around the needs and progress of the case and lack of follow through with commitments.
- The use of vouchers can be time consuming for resource parents as most stores who accept them often do not know the process and often require a manager's assistance. Resource parents' report it can take an hour just to check out, when using a voucher.

### **Concepts that could potentially increase recruitment and retention**

- Customer Service/Communication: reiterate to staff the significant role our resource families play, the importance of maintaining open communication, returning phone calls timely, ensure this is modeled at all levels, ensuring we are meeting or assisting in meeting the resource family's needs, bringing them along as practice shifts, continuing to incorporate Family Centered Practice/6 Principles of Partnership with our resource families, continue to reinforce they are part of a professional team and include them as part of the professional team. Increase the collaboration with resource parents when scheduling appointments and visitation, take into consideration their schedules and lives. Send out contact list for social workers and supervisors. Resource parents indicate social workers need to be more professional rather than personal; social workers might need further assistance in managing their own personal feelings so they are able to compartmentalize these feelings. May be beneficial to provide opportunities to support increase communication between case manager and licensing worker regarding placements and when there are issues, red flags with placements. Ensure social workers are utilizing out of office replies, updating voicemails, getting vouchers to resource parents timely, ensuring resource parents have basic supplies to care for children (i.e. diapers & formula).
- Address stigma and fear resource parents may have regarding "going up the chain of command," contacting supervisors and chiefs; reiterate we are all one big team and there are no repercussions for resource families to reach out to supervisors.
- Ensure resource families receiving copies of the child's social medical form, alternate care plans, and medical cards (Region 5).
- Continue to work on consistently facilitating icebreakers to help assist with establishing a connection between resource families and birth families.

- Provide clarification regarding the directive around normalizing a child's experience in resource care with staff, resource parents as well as with our PRIDE trainers and EWU (Regional Recruitment Coordinators and RPM's).
- Consistency around use and pay of respite across the state as well as educate staff on the importance of encouraging the use of respite among resource parents as a means of retention.
- Training for Staff: Treat them Like Gold (customer service); assessment of resource families during placement to assist social workers in identifying red flags indicative of disruption, comprehensive assessments of relative/fictive kin families when we are completing expedited placements to assist in decreasing potential relative disruptions down the road. Provide education for social workers on the various resources available to resource families. Consider providing additional training regarding Family Development Plans, the assessment and purpose of these plans. Ongoing education around Level 3 qualifications, supports, training around coaching resource families in mentoring birth families and supervised visitations as well as ensure social workers are consistent in communicating how safety concerns have been addressed to move towards unsupervised/monitored visitation.
- Trainings for Resource Parents: as Child Welfare practice evolves, we need to ensure we are communicating and bringing along our partners, provide more trainings applicable to resource parents needs i.e. trauma informed, RAD, discipline, specific to children's diagnosis, and adolescent struggling with sexual orientation issues.
- Consider revisiting requirements for relicensure contact process (currently call if no response sent out closure letter).
- Implement exit interviews.
- Continue to reinforce the importance for children to do work with resource parents and birth parents, the incorporation of planful transitions. Also, if there is an existing relationship between resource parent and birth parent encourage them to maintain the relationship upon reunification.
- Staff retention.
- Consistency around distribution of vouchers when children come into care; how do we ensure we are providing resource parents with the necessary items to ensure they can meet the children's needs. Set up free consignment store for resource parents to pay forward and take items for new placements (i.e. crib, furniture, clothes), consider tapping into the OCOC program to assist. VISA cards rather than vouchers.
- Networking for resource parents: allow resource parents to network (Meet & Greets with seasoned resource parents/RPM's at the beginning of PRIDE and consider implementing a networking opportunity with staff upon the completion of PRIDE, a graduation/congratulations session). Resource parents and staff indicated they would like to see chiefs and program manager at more resource parent support events.
- Resource parents suggested obtaining reimbursement for participating on the PRIDE panel.

- Coach out resource parents who continue to want to be licensed but have not accepted a placement in years.
- Increase RPM hours to provide support after initial placement and licensure.
- After hours crisis support line and a means of getting in touch with someone from the Department when the need approval with recommendations at a child's doctor appointment and for foster children to participate in activities.
- Provide more support after parental rights terminated prior to finalization of adoption (Region 7).
- Provide post-adoption services.
- Focus on increasing recruitment activities in rural communities.
- Continue to reiterate and communicate new Permanency Selection Standard to parents and resource parents (may lose resource parents in Region 6).
- Develop system to ensure newly licensed resource parents receive placement, if good match.
- Coaching out relatives may not be the best fit for placement, assist in avoiding disruption down the road (Region 6 Code X's completed and family not committed to children).
- Support when children are transitioning out of resource parents' home, which would address grief and loss, provide education for staff on services available for our resource parent, i.e. counseling.
- Explore ways to decreasing the length of time for resource parents to become licensed.

### **Desires**

- Increase the capacity for licensing workers to be supportive and build stronger relationships with their resource families. Licensing worker would like to be able to take a more active role in placements of children, have more contact with the resource family, complete support visits prior to getting complaints/reports regarding issues and/or disruptions.
- Increased communication between licensing workers and case managers (quality relationship) especially when there are identified concerns regarding a possible disruption.

### **Ideas to further the success of OCOC**

- Building capacity across child welfare to increase staff participation and involvement.
- VISTA's reach out directly to resource parents to see if they have needs and assist in meeting their needs.
- Being creative and looking for ways to partner with the LDS community.
- Increase the success in the recruitment of VISTAs, it is extremely challenging to fill this position.
- Create and implement more structure; identify roles as working with EWU (Regional Recruitment Coordinator and RPM's) and SNAPS. There appears to be some overlap; how can we work together and broaden our recruitment approaches.

- Educating the community and strengthening partnerships and relationships within community.
- Make VISTA's more visible to staff, increase engagement of staff, participate in all staff meetings, present at team meetings, check-ins.
- Reconnect and mend relationships with some churches we've initially partnered with.
- Ensure we follow through with our commitments.
- In Region 6, may have moved too fast in the beginning with little direction and no plan, thus have lost some partners. Refocus on a plan for the next year; look at creating another kick off with the commitment to follow through with partners.
- Utilize IL youth to help with recruitment, utilize them to speak at various community events.

### **Thoughts/suggestions**

- Resource Parent's Rights guide.
- Create a guide for resource parents to assist them when they are presenting in court. What to expect and what to share?
- Placement packets to assist and ensure resource parents obtain the information necessary to care for child(ren).
- Community Resource Guide for Resource Parent's.

## **North Hub Resource Parent Recruitment and Retention Themes**

The following feedback was obtained through the focus groups and participant interviews.

### **Strengths**

- RPM contract provides support through the licensure process; this support greatly assists resource parents in maintaining the motivation to complete the licensure process.
- There has been an increase in appreciation events at the Crock Center, Orphan Care Ministry, Relatives as Parents.
- Family Development Plans are being completed.
- Resource parents' are receiving notification of court dates in Coeur d'Alene.
- Resource family support group turnout has increased since it has been moved to the Crock Center and child care is provided.
- OCOC has created opportunities to reach out to rural communities in Region 2; and providing education to the community.

### **Barriers**

- Resource family support groups: time offered and getting social workers to attend and actively participate can create barriers. Resource parents report they want to have an atmosphere in which they can freely discuss their frustrations without feeling like what they share will get back to the social workers (tattle telling). Resource parents also suggested it would be helpful to have daycare/activities for older youth who require supervision.
- Application process: rural areas have limited access to computers; unable to complete online application or schedule fingerprinting; paperwork is intensive; some families may need assistance with completing the autobiography; obtaining character references, birth certificates and medical pieces timely creates delays. There is an increase in requests for flexibility with appointments, nights and weekends. Process is lengthy (6-9 months) and there is a lag time between completion of PRIDE and licensure.
- Trainings: PRIDE difficulty completing the training if commuting from rural areas (is teleconference an options?) and requires a large block of time to complete. Ongoing trainings for CEU's times and availability does not fit with foster parents' schedule (can there be a Foster Parent College, Webinars) and daycare is not always provided.
- Community perceptions and knowledge: Community appears to have a negative perception of the Department and are hesitant to partner. Ongoing relationship building and educating the community to assist in building and strengthening partnerships (OCOC).
- According to resource parents, they report there is limitation on gas vouchers offered/provided, ability to contract out services for foster parents such as crisis line, in-home behavioral intervention services, etc.

### **Concepts that could potentially assist with recruitment and retention**

- Customer Service/Communication—consistently reinforce the importance of supporting resource families, returning phone calls timely, ensure Family Centered Practice is being modeled at all levels; meeting resource family's needs (diapers, formula upon

placement); ensure communicating when changes within policy, rules and standards, even when there are recall on cribs and car seats. Resource families requested more education around the Placement Selection process.

- Addressing stigma regarding resource parents' fear of going up the "chain of command." Work on altering the perception resource parents have that if they were to call a supervisor or chief it could negatively impact them and be held against them, i.e. they will no longer be called to accept placements or would not be seen as a permanency option for a child.
- There is an ongoing need for recruitment of resource families for all ages and needs (developmentally delayed, medically fragile children, adolescents)—get creative-informational meetings at local colleges, hospitals, etc. and utilize resources in house that have relationships/partnerships within community.
- Increase RPM hours after placement— this would also require some guidelines around what type of support can be provided and training for RPM's and what is beyond their expertise.
- Implement Exit Surveys.
- Consistently implement meaningful icebreakers between resource families and birth parents as well as continue to encourage the participation of resource families in FGDMs.
- Licensing workers have more availability/capacity to develop meaningful relationships with their resource families and to be a support, increase information sharing between case managers and licensing workers when resource parents are struggling with a placement.
- Respite: creating a list (include preferences) that is accessible to foster parents to assist them in coordinating their own respite; ensure reimbursement is completed timely; provide clarity around respite reimbursement rate, use, process and possibly work towards statewide consistency of the use of respite; provide opportunities and support networking for foster parents i.e. meet and greets provide opportunity for foster parents exchange contact information, ensure monthly foster care payments are released timely.
- Trainings for resource parents' (flexibility with PRIDE for rural areas i.e. teleconference, Foster Care College for CEU's, bring foster parents along when we are having practice shifts i.e. Trauma Informed Practice, Connected Child and creating a curriculum specific to the needs of resource families. Resource families are requesting CPR training, especially those families taking medically fragile children and babies.
- Be more creative in how the Department demonstrates appreciation to resource families rather than just a closure letter, when they adopt or provide years of service.
- Ensure resource families are being supported when children are transitioning home or to another permanent placement. Educate resource parents and staff as to what services are available for support to assist in addressing grief and loss.
- Decrease the length of the licensure process, currently it's anywhere from 6 to 9 or even 12 months.
- iCARE reports—placement openings, consistent reports of demographics around children coming into care, respite list.
- Family Development Plans are being completed when issues arise, but not consistently and not prior to issues. Consider looking at options to ensure these are completed to provide support and education to enhance resource family's skills and knowledge.
- Ongoing assessment of resource families: staff training on how to complete quality monthly home visits and assess for needs among resource families which could

potentially assist in identify red flags associated with disruptions. Upon identifying concerns related to possible disruption, provide support and resources prior to the point of disruption.

- Ongoing communication, education and strengthening relationships and partnerships within the community.
- Look at various ways the Department can provide assistance for transportation of children, many resource parents are being communicated they are no longer able to access gas vouchers.
- Continue to advocate for resource family's voices to be heard in court. This will require ongoing work with the Deputy Attorney General, prosecutor and CASA to further assist.
- Resource parents indicated at times they need assistance in advocating for children in school settings.
- Ensure social workers are clear as to the confidentiality standard and aware of what information they can provide resource parents regarding child(ren)'s needs to ensure they can safely care for children. Ensure social workers are providing Alternate Care Plans and the child's social medical form.
- Create opportunities that will assist in increased communication between licensing workers and case managers (quality relationship), especially when there are identified concerns regarding possible disruption to enable licensing workers to have further knowledge and provide support to resource families.

## **Desires**

- Would like to be able to contract out safety assessments/investigations on resource families and ensure the family receives support during the process.
- Ability to provide clinical support services for foster parents.
- Post adoption support/services.
- Licensing workers would like more availability to be supportive of their families.
- Flexible spending funds for the licensing team to be able provide support for resource family.

## **Ideas to further the success of OCOC**

- Taking another look at how the program and objectives are being messaged, ensure we are effectively communicating the vision.
- Create more structure; identification of roles while working with EWU (Regional Recruitment Coordinator and RPM's) and SNAPS. There appears to be some overlap; how can we work together and broaden our recruitment approaches.
- Strengthen the relationships between VISTA's and CW. Increase involvement in team meetings and All Staffs to provide feedback with staff as to what VISTA's are working on, what's going on, identify needs, etc.
- Helping increase staff capacity across CW to increase staff participation.
- Increase communication about the program and share successes.
- Create a communication forum to allow us to communicate the needs with our partners (Website).
- Create a seamless process for volunteers.



## West Hub Resource Parent Recruitment and Retention Themes

The following feedback was obtained through the focus groups and participant interviews.

### Strengths

- Icebreakers are consistently implemented with resource and birth families (Region 4).
- Resource parent participation in FGDMs; resource families are consistently invited but the times they are typically held creates a barrier with attendance.
- Support services offered (FPS) for resource families and the licensing workers are viewed as huge support by their resource families.
- Resource families feel supported by some caseworkers and these workers are consistent in returning phone calls right away.
- The licensing process is smooth and typically quick.
- The licensing team provides initial placement support for safety assessors when children come into care (Region 4).
- PRIDE is offered in Spanish.
- OCOC has assisted in recruitment, retention and support for birth families.
- Resource families shared the Department has “some excellent workers” (Region 4).
- The implementation of Normalizing Children’s Experience in Foster Care Directive has assisted with retention/support for resource families.

### Barriers

- Customer Service/Communication (at all levels):
  - Lack of trust and consistency, different messages from workers and supervisors.
  - Basic customer service: lack of responsiveness and returned phone calls are not completed timely, social workers are not consistent in updating voicemail/email if out of office and providing contact information for who is covering. Resource families indicate at times accessing vouchers and obtaining their monthly payments timely is challenging.
  - Resource parents want to have emotionally charged conversations in person or on the phone, not through email or text. They don’t feel like social workers are always having meaningful contact.
  - Social worker views on confidentiality varies, which results in inconsistency of the information being shared with resource parents. Ensuring resource parents are getting all the information to assist them in safely caring for children.
  - Resource families don’t feel case workers value or validate them and the work they do. Resource parents wished social workers would collaborate on scheduling appointments and visitation. Resource families often feel they are told when and what to do, rather than being consulted about their schedules and lives.
- Licensing Process:



- Resource parents don't feel PRIDE accurately prepares them and it is not engaging.
- Sometimes it can be difficult to sign up on online, often end up calling the PRIDE trainer.
- Scheduling fingerprinting has created barriers, resulting in delaying the process.
- The application is lengthy; the autobiography sometimes delays process and can at times create some apprehension with continuing with the application, as well as obtaining written references. Resource families have indicated it would be helpful if the Department was more specific about what they are looking for in the autobiography as well as for the references (provide an example or bullet of what looking for).
- Streamlining people coming in the door, there is a different process when it comes to fostering versus adoption in Region 4. It may be helpful to have a more centralized process to assist with the informational flow and response.
- Follow up on inquiries more timely including adoption inquiries.
- Consistent process with adoption and foster care inquiries.
- Staff turnover.
- Child care for resource parents –smooth process.

### **Concepts that could potentially assist with retention and recruitment**

- Would like to increase the recruitment of quality well prepared families; provide flyers to resource families to hand out to assist with recruitment, ensure flyers/posters are available for churches; PSA's, way to "canvas the world" provide information at every community event.
- Provide support services available after hours, in-home crisis behavioral intervention services, just having someone to talk to, can on-call be more supportive.
- Post adoptive services.
- Alter the current stigma/culture/perceptions shared by resource families regarding the fear resource parents may experience if they "go up the chain of command," create a safe environment that indicates to resource parents that "we are one big team."
- Customer service: basic customer services etiquette, returning phone calls and emails timely, update voicemail and email when out of office and provide information regarding who is covering, providing full disclosure of child(ren)'s needs which includes child's social medical form and alternate care plan, follow through with commitments and appointments, invested in developing relationships with resource families, and ensure monthly contacts are meaningful.
- Consistent Communication
  - around support for transportation (gas vouchers)
  - Icebreakers
  - support/services provided when children transition out of their home around grief and loss (educate staff on what's available)

- Respite
- New Placement Selection process
- Level 3 (staff training) processing requests
- Ensuring we are diligent in including resource parents as part of the professional team throughout the case (may be invited to FGDM, but their opinion not always asked)—better prepare resource parents for what to expect at the meeting i.e. conversation around Permanency
- Timely reimbursement, payments (Region 3).
- Recruit homes for sexually acting out children, significant behaviors, and sibling groups.
- PRIDE training realistic and increase the engagement and discussion of potential resource parents; create opportunities for resource parents to network and build a support system (consider at the initial PRIDE class invite seasoned resource parents to attend as well as invite staff to participate in the last session as a meet and greet/graduation/congratulations session). Consider providing more education around icebreakers, their purpose and how can the resource parent assist in the success of the meeting. There may be added value in having a variety of seasoned resource parents presenting on the panel, mixing it up.
- Respite/Support lists for resource parents.
- Trainings for resource parents: RAD; discipline for difficult behaviors, de-escalating behaviors, trauma informed practice; Connected Child, setting boundaries (relative/kinship parent); visitation (expectations, supervision, report back, ending visits if safety issues); how to identify triggers resulting in behavioral issues among children and how to intervene to help child—long term effects; special training aimed towards high risk children; seasoned resource parents share how they manage difficult behaviors; trainings on how to care for FAS children. Navigating various systems within the community (developmental, speech therapy, etc.) when obtaining services for children with special needs as well as working with the school system when children are on IEP's. Invite resource parents to participate in staff trainings. The following past resource parent support group/trainings that have been helpful: gangs, basic hygiene and hair care for ethnic children, CASA spoke, prosecuting attorney presented on the court process and what to expect. Webinars and online trainings would be helpful given the current schedules resource parents are managing.
- Trainings for staff—(car seat, etc. ensure new staff are aware of how to install) Treat them Like Gold; assessments of resource parents; identifying red flags associated with disruption; training and coaching resource parents around mentoring birth families, supervising visitation, etc. Ongoing coaching with staff, building their skill level in addressing issues and having uncomfortable conversations with resource parents. Working with staff in regards to consistently implementing a team approach, responsiveness and understanding the importance of nurturing relationships with resource parents; consistent implementation of basic customer service (i.e. returning phone calls, getting vouchers and exploring ways to assist with transportation) which are all important to our resource families.

- Capture the good things.
- Increase RPM hours after placement; recruit RPM's and strengthen program.
- Resource family support groups—consider renaming them as well as ensuring resource parents have a clear understanding of the purpose (training), advertising and getting information out on when they are occurring and the topic. Increase communication around trainings for resource parents and reiterating training they receive during a support groups goes towards their required 10 hours yearly training.

### **Desires**

- Contract out Icebreakers.
- Broadcast recruitment efforts/advertise.
- Increase respite payments.
- Increase ability for resource children to participate in recreational activities.
- Develop a program similar to PIC in Washington (alternative substance abuse treatment center allows parents to care for their children while they are in inpatient treatment).
- Revise Foster Care Recreation Policy—specific to high-risk activities.

### **Ideas to further the success of OCOC**

- Need to revisit our messaging to ensure we are effectively communicating the vision.
- Create more structure; identify roles as working with EWU (Regional Recruitment Coordinator and RPM's) and SNAPS. There appears to be some overlap; how can we work together and broaden our recruitment approaches.
- Foothills Christian Church Night out has contributed to retention. Can a church in Caldwell do one, too?
- Create a plan to support our church partners during interims when the VISTA has departed to enable sustainability and maintain programmatic momentum.

### **Thoughts/suggestions**

- Consider the use of placement packets, which provides the resource family with basic information i.e. use of vouchers, what to do in case of an emergency, 5 things to ask your caseworker," etc.
- Implementing a guide for resource families on what questions to ask regarding children's needs at placement.
- During the holiday season, consider adopting a resource family versus resource child; and focus on getting children items they need.
- Create a directory of resources for resource families and send out.
- Consider creating a "child friendly" environment in the lobby at the Caldwell office. Having an environment that has toys and books for the children while they are waiting for appointments or visitation.

## **Questionnaire Inventory**

## **Child Welfare Lead Chiefs, Chiefs & Licensing Supervisors**

1. What recruitment strategies are working? How are these strategies being monitored?
2. List three reasons why it is difficult to recruit? Barriers
3. What areas do you feel need improvement?
4. What child demographics are in most need of resource parents, i.e. teenagers, special needs?
5. What groups or communities can you target who might be willing to care for these children? What is the best way to do this?
6. What do you feel your Region/Hub needs to be successful in recruitment?
7. What do you feel resource parents need to be successful?
8. How can staff outside of licensing/recruitment contribute to agency's efforts? How can you promote that or engage staff?
9. What does the collaboration between IDHW staff, EWU and OCOC look like in your area?
10. Has the involvement of OCOC further assisted with recruitment of resource families?
11. How many staff designated to licensing, what are responsibilities as far as completing licensure etc.? Mutual Assessment/Home Study: Timelines and expectations for staff related to completion of process? What type of assistance is provided for prospective parents who have fixable impediments (i.e. minor home repairs, beds for children, medical exams, fees, etc.)? What does the conversation look like regarding expectations for birth family involvement and sibling contact and special needs of children they are considering fostering?
12. What are the common barriers to certification or approval of licensure?
13. What retention techniques are utilized with current resource parents?
14. How are the assessments of resource families' continued learning needs being done? Reg. 5 personnel evaluations Ongoing training what are the barriers for attendance and/or providing trainings? Where are the plans to build upon the resource family's knowledge and skills documented? Family Development Plan
15. What are the top 3-5 problems that cause resource families to leave?
16. What respite care options exist and how frequently are they utilized?
17. When are support visits done between licensing workers and resource families, what do these visits look like?
18. If you had a magic wand and could make three changes to improve the areas of work you are in charge of, what would they be?
19. What changes do you believe would have the greatest impact?
20. How would you define success for these areas of work?

## Child Welfare Licensing Supervisor and Social Workers

1. What strategies are working with recruitment?
2. What do you see as the agency's strengths and needs related to resource family recruitment and support? (barriers)
3. What retention techniques are utilized with current resource parents? Which of these do you feel are the most successful?
4. What do you need to further assist with the recruitment and retention of resource parents?
5. Has the involvement of OCOC further assisted with recruitment/retention of resource families?
6. How can staff outside of licensing/recruitment contribute to agency's efforts?
7. What child demographics are in most need of resource parents, i.e. teenagers, special needs?
8. What does support look like in following potential resource families through the licensure process? Typically who follows up with inquiry after 211 receives request=Regional Coordinator/Licensing worker.... Is that person responsible for ongoing follow-up = hand off to RPM's? What does typical communication look like between DHW staff, Regional Coordinator, RPM's to ensure we don't miss the opportunity to engage a potential resource parent?
9. What are current statistics regarding the percentage of resource families follow through with licensure (10% per Adopt US Kids)? Are there barriers with the Informational/Orientation Meetings? Does location (are the locations easy to find and near public transport.) of Informational/Orientation Meeting and PRIDE impact ability to access more general placements? Is childcare available? Does the schedule meet various family schedules?
10. How is the topic/training during the Foster Care Support Group determined?
11. Application process, what type of assistance is provided for families who may need assistance in completing paperwork?
12. What is average time frame between each follow-up from inquiry (48 hrs. per standard), initial orientation meetings, application process, PRIDE, licensure? 3-6 months?
13. Mutual Assessment/Home Study: Timelines and expectations for staff related to completion of process? What type of assistance is provided for prospective parents who have fixable impediments (i.e. minor home repairs, beds for children, medical exams, fees, etc.)?
14. What does the conversation look like regarding expectations for birth family involvement and sibling contact and special needs of children they are considering fostering?
15. What are the top 3-5 reasons resource families' drop out of the licensing process?
16. What are the reasons most general foster homes do not proceed with relicensure?
17. Are the common barriers to certification or approval of licensure, if so what are they?
18. What does support look like for resource parents when a child is transitioning/leaving their home?
19. How many resource families in your area are not accepting placements? What are some of the reasons behind this?

20. Do you ever have concerns a resource family is not prepared to care for a child and/or sibling group? What training and support would make you feel confident that your licensed families are competent and prepared to care for these children?
21. What groups or communities would you target who might be willing to care for these children? What do you believe is the best way to do this?
22. What do the assessments of resource families continued learning needs look like? ( Reg. 5 personnel evaluations) Ongoing training what are the barriers for attendance and/or providing trainings? Where are the plans to build upon the resource family's knowledge and skills documented? Are the assessments and plan found in the Family Development Plan?
23. Do you believe there is flexibility in attending PRIDE for potential resource families, with work schedules, child care etc.? What are the alternative methods considered across the Hub?
24. When are support visits done with resource families, what do these visits look like? At what point are you aware a recourse family is struggling and may need additional support? How do you obtain this information? Is there a common theme among resource families and the support they need?
25. Can you talk about the current respite care options and how frequently are they utilized? Are they encouraged? Are there barriers?
26. If you had a magic wand and could make three changes to improve the areas of work you are in charge of, what would they be?
27. Which changes do you believe would have the greatest impact?
28. How would you define success for these areas of work? What would effective foster care recruitment and retention look like (if you could develop without any restrictions)

## Regional Peer Mentors and Resource Parents

1. What do you like most about being a resource parent?
2. What is the most challenging piece of being a resource parent?
3. What does our agency do well specifically in regards to recruitment, retention and supporting resource parents?
4. List three reasons why difficult to recruit?
5. What are our agency's greatest needs or areas of improvement? Challenges/frustrations and success they saw in the system.
6. How can you contribute to our agency's efforts?
7. Which marketing approaches are most successful in recruiting people who make it through the licensing process?
8. Did you feel you were provided with the information needed to understand your role, expectations, and process? Did you receive the assistance you needed to fill out forms, obtain information and complete applications process? What challenges did you face? What was the most helpful?
9. What barriers to you believe there is related to the licensing process and retention:

[Full disclosure, no copy of case plan so don't know how to support child and/or family, timely responses from case workers, visitation between case worker and child not frequent enough challenging children unable to meet the challenge, lack of clarity around role and inclusion of resource families (not included in the case planning process, fear if they speak out children will be moved, don't feel treated or viewed as equal members of the professional team; lack of effective partnership between resource families and birth families.]

10. What does our agency do to keep you working with us as a resource family?
  - a. Which retention strategies are most successful?
11. Upon initial placement, when are you contacted by, what does that contact look like?
12. What do you need from the agency to feel supported?
13. What information do you receive in regards to potential placements? What further information would be helpful for you to know to further assist you in caring for the child(ren)?
14. How do you think the agency could further assist foster parents in preparing them for caring for children who experienced trauma?
15. What training or support would make you feel more comfortable about caring for these children?
16. What type of support do you receive when a child is transitioning/leaving your home?
17. Are the Support Groups helpful? What type of trainings/support do you receive through these groups? Are there areas that could improve the outcome and attendance of these support groups?
18. Does your licensing worker or other case worker complete support visits with you? If so what triggers these visits and what do they look like?
19. Are there common themes in the type of support resource families need, if so what are they?



20. Are you receiving invites to participate in FGDM's? Do you find participating in FGDM's helpful? Why?