

New Mexico Child Abuse & Neglect Citizen Review Board

CRB Interim Report on Foster Parenting In New Mexico

AUGUST 2005



To report abuse or neglect, please
call CYFD Statewide Central Intake
at 1-800-797-3260



Albuquerque: 505-217-0226
Statewide: 866-857-2976
Web: nmcrb.org

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 30228
Albuquerque, NM 87190-0228



In late 2003, the Research and Investigation Subcommittee of the Statewide Advisory Committee of the New Mexico Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Board (CRB) began a research project to identify recommendations that would enable foster parents to better support the children entrusted to their care. The child abuse and neglect system as a whole needs an in-depth understanding of foster parenting issues in order to plan for the safety and wellbeing of each child.

The CRB project developed a survey of 20 questions and distributed it to a list of 850 foster parents all around New Mexico. A total of 135 completed surveys were returned, from 26 of the 33 New Mexico counties. Of the respondents to the survey, 75 identified themselves as regular foster parents (FP), while 46 identified as treatment foster parents. (TFP). The remaining 14 respondents reported as being both. The difference between FP and TFP, aside from training, is that all TFP's are under the auspices of a treatment agency as well as Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD), when a child is in state custody. A wide range of experience was reflected in the survey responses:

Provider Type	Range of years experience	Average years experience	Range of children served	Average number served
Regular	6 mo. – 36 yrs.	4.3 years	1 to 90	12.2
Treatment	1 yr. – 9 yrs.	4.8 years	1 to 45	6.3
Both	1 yr. – 17 yrs.	6.1 years	1 to 66	20.4

Results of Data Analysis

Frequency of contact with workers in the system:

Number of CYFD social workers assigned to current foster children during their time in care:

- 88 Parents reported 1-2 (72 %)
- 26 Parents reported 3-4 (21 %)
- 9 Parents reported 5 or more (7 %)

Number of times children have seen a CYFD social worker in the past year:

- 70 Parents reported at least monthly (53 %)
- 47 Parents reported every 2 months or less often (36 %)

Number of children who had Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

- 72 Parents reported having CASA volunteers (59 %)
- Of the families with CASA volunteer, 12 children had contact at least monthly (10 %) in the past year.

Number of times children had visited their Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) in the past year:

- 61 Families reported never having seen their (GAL) in the past year (51 %)
- 6 Families reported seeing their GAL monthly or more often (5 %)

Notification of events:

CYFD Staffings:

- 63 reported never being notified of CYFD staffings (52 %)
- 23 families said they were always notified (19 %)

Court Hearings:

- 28 reported never being notified for court hearings (29 %)
- 48 families said they were always notified (50 %)

CRB Case Reviews:

- 20 reported never being notified of CRB case reviews (17 %)
- 45 families said they were always notified (37 %)



Foster Parent attendance at events:

- 58 Families reported never attending CYFD staffings (46 %)
- 40 Families reported never attending court hearings (30 %)
- 35 Families reported never attending a CRB case review (27 %)



Information to Foster Parents:

Traveling files for each child in Regular Foster Care:

- 19 Families reported receiving traveling files for each child in their care (25 %)
- 19 Families reported receiving the files sometimes (25 %)
- 39 Families reported having not received a traveling file for each child in their care (50 %)

Respite files for children in Treatment Foster Care:

- 41 Families reported receiving respite files for each child in their care (79 %)
- 11 Families reported having not received a respite file for each child in their care (21 %)

Sufficient pre-placement information:

- 46 Families reported receiving sufficient information (34 %)
- 37 Families reported not receiving sufficient information (28 %)
- 50 Families reported sometimes receiving sufficient information (38 %)

Procedural Requirements:

Participation in case planning with CYFD:

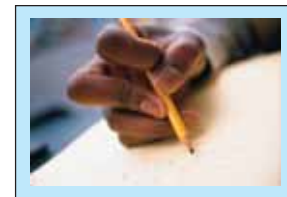
- 69 Families reported participating in case planning at least sometimes (54 %)
- 58 Families reported not participating in case planning (45 %)

CYFD Substitute Care Agreement:

- 36 Regular Foster Parents reported always having a substitute care agreement at time of placement (48 %)
- 39 Families reported not always having a substitute care agreement (52 %)
- 38 Treatment Foster Care Parents reported always having a substitute care agreement at time of placement (64 %)
- 18 Families reported not always having a substitute care agreement (31 %)

Notification of children being removed from foster home:

- 52 families reported having enough notice (48 %)
- 22 families reported not having enough notice (21 %)
- 34 families reported sometimes having enough notice (31 %)



Foster Parent Support:

Did children in your care get the services they need?

Type of Service	Yes (percent)	No (percent)	Sometimes (percent)
Medical	90	1	9
Mental Health	68	17	15
Dental	92	4	4
Educational	76	10	14

For families for which reimbursement was appropriate, have you been fairly reimbursed by CYFD for:

Type of Cost	Yes (percent)	No (percent)	Sometimes (percent)
Child care	84	10	6
Special needs	58	21	21
Out-of-pocket	53	23.5	23.5

Foster Parent mentor:

- 51 families said a foster parent mentor would be helpful (41 %)

Appropriate placements:

- 35 families reported that they have had a child placed with them for whom they could not provide for the child's basic needs (30 %)

Being valued as a Foster parent:

- 53 Regular Foster Parents feel that they and their work are valued (75 %)
- 51 Treatment Foster Parents feel that they and their work is valued (86 %)
- Of the foster parents responding to the question, 60% have been contacted by or have contact with their former foster children.

Foster parents most commonly identified the following things in the foster care system that are working:

1. Social worker doing a good job.
2. Removing a child from dangerous situations and providing a safe, stable environment.
3. CASA and CRB volunteers who are real children's advocates.

Foster parents most commonly identified the following things in the foster care system that they would change if they could:

1. Higher rate of reimbursement.
2. More foster parent input and respect for foster parents.
3. Better and more detailed disclosures (specific child information) provided earlier in the process.



Summary and Recommendations

During the course of its 2004 research, the New Mexico Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Board's Statewide Advisory Committee (SAC) found that foster parents most commonly identified three items that they felt needed improvements in New Mexico's foster care system. These items were higher reimbursement rates, more input and respect for foster parents, and better and more detailed information provided to foster parents as early in the process as possible.

In conjunction with its 2004 research study examining the perceptions of foster parents from around New Mexico, and recognizing the most commonly identified areas for improvement according to the foster parents we studied, SAC presents the following recommendations to New Mexico's child protection community.

1. The community (Children, Youth and Families Department, foster parents, the courts, attorneys, volunteer advocates and others) should continue to assess the current rates of reimbursement for foster care providers while considering changes in the costs of providing care over the past ten years. The community should identify appropriate reimbursement increases for foster parents and develop a comprehensive strategy for acquiring the financial resources to implement the increase.
2. New Mexico's child protection community should maximize input from foster parents and demonstrate respect for their work and their status as members of the child's treatment team in the following ways:
 - Improving notification of foster parents for events such as CYFD staffings, court hearings and CRB reviews. Foster parent attendance at these events should increase by ten percent.
 - Increasing the amount of contact between guardian ad litem and foster parents, and CASA volunteers and foster parents. Communication should occur at least monthly.

Foster parents live with the abused and neglected children in state’s custody; they often know the children best and are often most aware of the children’s immediate and long-term needs. Foster parents enhance the system that cares for abused and neglected children. Foster parents are a precious resource to the children and to the system itself. In the course of the research, CRB often heard from the foster parents that the system could do a better job of recognizing them as professionals and as critical members of the child’s permanency and treatment teams. Another prominent suggestion was that CYFD improve its ability to implement and consistently apply its existing policies and procedures regarding foster care statewide. Hopefully, continuing partnership between CYFD the foster parents and the other interested organizations can result in the implementation of these suggestions with little or no financial impact. Finally, the input collected suggests a number of potential systemic improvements that would certainly require a new investment of dollars and human resources.

Foster Parents’ Recommendations for continued improvement of established policy

- Continue to minimize the amount of traumatic separations for the child (and for the foster parents) by focusing on the goal of children staying in a placement for as long as possible until permanency is achieved.
- Be sensitive to the loss both the foster parent and child are experiencing when a child is removed from the home; give adequate time and respect to the separation and grieving process.
- Consistently notify foster parents, in a timely manner regarding: Court hearings, treatment team meetings, staffings, medical appointments, visitations, CRB reviews, etc.
- Provide complete “traveling files” (in treatment foster care, “respite files”) when the children are first placed in the foster home, including each child’s Medicaid card, necessary identifying information, and information that includes all aspects of each child: personal history of each child, medical, educational, psychological, etc.
- Pay monthly foster care payments and reimbursements in full and when payment is due.
- Consistently follow CYFD policies and procedures in all areas of the state.
- Continue to improve timeliness of placement agreements and foster home licensing renewals.
- Continue including foster parents in training with the appropriate CYFD personnel, particularly when implementing new policies or modifying existing ones.

Foster Parents’ Recommended statewide investments for systemic improvements

- Increase reimbursement rates for foster parents. The state needs to realistically pay for the necessities for these children, as well as the “extras” that help each child develop into a productive adult.
- Increase appropriate foster parent training – initial and on-going. Particular training areas requested include reactive attachment disorder and the purpose and techniques of visitation between the foster child, siblings, and/or biological parents.
- Decrease social worker turnover, hire more social workers, and reduce caseloads. Turnover and heavy social worker caseload negatively impacts foster children and foster homes.
- Fund the positions of Foster Parent Liaisons in each county office around the state.

Foster care for these abused and neglected children who have needs above and beyond the “average child”. CRB data collected during 2003 – 2004 from the reviews completed on **1,665** foster children show just some of their special needs:

- **778** children were diagnosed with behavioral and/or emotional problems.
- **559** children had educational and/or developmental delays.
- **256** children had physical and/or medical problems.

Increasing reimbursement rates to a more realistic level given the inflation that has taken place in the last 10 years and the increasing complexity and needs of these vulnerable children would help the children and foster parents. An increase would also help CYFD meet their performance standards of recruiting and retaining quality foster parents.

How much do foster parents currently receive?

Children’s Ages	Reimbursement
0 – 5 Years	\$ 13.60 per day
6 – 2 Years	\$ 14.70 per day
13 Years or older	\$ 15.57 per day

Foster parents must be available 24 hours a day to these special needs children. Included in the rates are: room and board, clothing, hair care/personal, diapers, school expenses, mileage to children’s appointments, activity fees, and babysitting.

What Is The Citizen Review Board...



The Citizen Review Boards meet in the following locations:

Alamogordo

Albuquerque

Bernalillo

Carlsbad

Clovis

Deming

Espanola

Estancia

Farmington

Gallup

Grants

Hobbs

Las Cruces

Las Vegas

Los Lunas

Raton

Roswell

Santa Fe

Silver City

Socorro

Taos

Truth or
Consequences

Tucumcari

The Citizen Review Board has over 180 volunteers staffing 34 local review boards statewide. It is an independent project legislatively created by the State of New Mexico with a two part mandate.

- To review the cases of children in the custody of the State and make recommendations to the Judge who presides over the case.
- To make recommendations to the New Mexico Legislature, the Children, Youth and Families Department, and the courts regarding the statutes, policies and procedures relating to substitute care..

The volunteers who make up the New Mexico Citizen Review Board (CRB) have one goal “to make New Mexico’s foster care system the best it can be”. In light of this goal, the volunteers who review the cases of children in the Children, Youth and Families Department’s custody are aware that many people and agencies are involved in the complex foster care system.

We believe that the children who are abused and neglected deserve the best possible services and should be in a permanent home that provides love, nurturing and protection as quickly as possible.

Each local review board meeting provides an opportunity for the parties involved in a case to present information pertinent to the child’s progress toward a permanent loving and safe home. The information gathered at these meetings form the basis for a written report with recommendations that the local board sends to the presiding Judge. Additionally, the statewide compilation of the statistical data gleaned from these meetings, provide the basis for CRB’s recommendations to the legislature, the Children, Youth and Families Department and the courts.

For More Information...

- Contact the New Mexico Citizen Review Board office in Albuquerque (505) 217-0227 or toll free at (866) 857-2976
- Visit the CRB website at www.nmcrb.org for up-to-date information on what is happening with the abused and neglected children the CRB boards review.
- See the CRB Annual Report for additional recommendations and information (reported by state and county) on the abused and neglected children of New Mexico.

If you would like a copy of our Annual Report and Interim Reports highlighting other important issues in the abuse and neglect system, please contact us.



New Mexico Friends of Foster Children Fund

While basic life necessities are provided to children in foster care, there are many unique needs which are not funded by State programs. With assistance of our friends and supporters, New Mexico Friends of Foster Children Fund can help those children in ways that shape the course of their lives. For more information on the application process or how you can donate, please call our office at (505) 217-0227 or toll free at (866) 857-2976.

Your help and support are needed!