

Supporting and Honoring Foster Parents

Organized by Themes & Innovative Ideas

List collected from field – July 2017

Themes and practices occurring in multiple locations throughout the State:

Newsletters for caregivers (monthly or quarterly) that include:

- Training information
- Events
- Recognition

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Support groups for:

- Foster parents
- Grandparents
- Adoption
- Infant & toddler
- Teen
- Spanish-language

(Some of these groups are attended by certifiers and sometimes also managers.)

Cards for foster parents and relative caregivers to:

- Acknowledging extraordinary work
- At various milestones of service
- Following the move of child from a home
- At difficult times
- Sympathy
- Get-well cards

(Cards sent from various staff – management, caseworker or certification.)

Appreciation events that could include prizes, raffle drawings, gifts, awards, activities and food:

- Dinners
- Picnics
- BBQs
- Pool party
- Bowling party
- Holiday party

(Donations of prizes, gifts, etc. made possible from local business or individuals.)

Ongoing training opportunities made available.



Activities done in several locales:

Certificates to acknowledge years of service (1 year, 5 years, 10 years, etc.).

Special designated areas for foster parents and efforts to make their visits to the office easier and more comfortable by:

- Foster parent waiting rooms/ lounge area nicely decorated with inclusive amenities such as:
 - tv
 - magazines/ other reading materials
 - toys
 - coffee
- Separate door
- Video monitor at front door to allow foster parents in with minimum wait time
- Dedicated parking spaces close to the office for ease of child pick up and drop off for visits or appointments.

Foster parent night out, with DHS staff liaisons to coordinate.

Help with acquiring respite ('mix and mingle' events, connecting those interested in providing respite with foster families and relative caregivers).

Clothing resources for foster parents- either community partner or branch organized.

Facebook websites for foster/adopt in local areas.

Foster Parent Associations in various local offices (some with quarterly check-ins with local managers).


Holding training in local communities to reduce travel to families.

Carving out specialized focus positions:

- Recruiter
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Support
- Training

District-wide discussions of efforts to support and honor foster parents.

Facilitate community holiday 'gift tree wish lists' to supply gifts for children in foster care, which eases stress and additional expenses for foster families and relative caregivers.



Partnership with Every Child or Embrace Oregon to facilitate community participation in supporting and encouraging foster parents and beautifying the office environment where they spend much time.

Arranging child care for training events, support groups, or appreciation events which is supportive and increases attendance.

Mentor program or mentor list, to match more experienced foster parents with newer ones, for additional support.

Local foster parent advisory, with regular management presence for relationship-building, timely communication and problem-solving.

Acquisition of passes for foster families to use for activities such as:

- Children's museum
- Trampoline park
- The aquarium
- Sporting events
- A movie event for foster families.

1:1 support by phone, email, being available outside business hours via on-call worker.

Local office lending-library with training materials for providers.

Innovative or unique items:

Thoughtful gestures:

- Bringing flowers to foster parents from your yard
- ??Staff potting plants and delivered to foster parents with cards signed by staff
- Taking ice cream to home visits
- Outlook calendar with foster parent birthdates
- Thank you video- featuring staff expressing their appreciation
- Management recognition of the unit from each branch who completes the most cards for foster parents

Increasing sense of 'community' and connectedness between caregivers:

- Foster parent meet up in neighborhood parks
- Organizing 'Foster Family Fun' events
- Fun activities
- Sharing information about local resources
- Providing time for foster families to socialize

Partnering with caregivers for recruitment, utilizing their expertise, and improving relationship:

- Involvement of foster parent and casework staff in local recruitment and retention planning on a monthly basis
- Partner with foster parents for recruitment events
- Offer foster parent a small gift card (made possible from local business or individuals) acknowledging this commitment to partnership
- Creating a team comprised of DHS staff, foster parents, and community representatives to direct and implement recruitment and retention efforts (GRACE Action Team)
- Including foster parents at unit meetings or all-staff meetings to ensure their perspective is included, heard, considered and valued
- Manager setting up regular coffee meeting with foster parents to hear their perspective in person
- Providing staff for time with foster parent groups to create relationship and understand perspectives

Attention to tangible items which lessen the financial burden of caregiving:

- Donation List for the Community to help provide ongoing needs:
 - Backpacks
 - New Pajamas
 - New Sock
 - New Underwear
 - Welcome Boxes
 - Welcome Bags
 - Toiletries
 - School supplies
- Purchase of items necessary for certification if it can resolve a barrier to relative placement (fire extinguisher, carbon monoxide alarms, etc.)
- Help with costs associated with lice treatment when needed
- Diaper program offering very low cost for foster parents

Improvements to timely communication, access to staff, and expedited certification:

- Initiated a 'foster parent help line' so that a live person answers and responds to foster parent when the caseworker, supervisor and certifier are not available
- 24/7 availability for crisis support needs (pilot)
- Utilization of certification tech support staff to: help increase speed of response to foster parents when they have questions, accessing certifier or supervisors quickly with urgent issues from foster parents, helping them enroll in trainings, assisting applicants through the fingerprint process
- Upon opening new certificate, sending provider an email with the name, phone number of their certifier and other contact people within the branch
- Monthly meeting between program manager and local foster parent association



System for providing more intensive supports when child first placed:

- Calling foster parent a day or two after a new placement to see how they're doing and if they need anything
- Implementing certifier home visit within 7-10 days of a new placement to ensure they have the information they need

Involvement of the community to support efforts:

- Partnering with local community businesses, faith communities, and other entities to help with acknowledgement events and supports to foster parents
- Partnering with community organizations and businesses to host holiday party for foster families and children, along with an event called 'Candy Cane Lane' which allows foster families to shop for gifts for children in foster care
- Partnering with local university for college students who can volunteer- child care, redecorating the waiting room, tutoring foster youth
- Partnering with local community to support 'Wake the World' events, which allow foster families and children in foster care to have a boating, wake boarding, tubing, and/or water skiing experience for the day
- Talking with Mental Health provider about joint-newsletter for foster parents

Providing additional support at difficult times:

- Therapist support when child leaves a foster home
- Sending card and flowers to caregiver after tragedies occur

Training efforts:

- Designing specialized training for foster parents who want to foster LGBTQIA youth
- Organizing and providing child care for a two-day annual training conference for foster parents
- 1:1 training which is more child-specific, geared toward the needs expressed by the certifier, caseworker and/or foster parent

Use of technology:

- Frequent local media outreach efforts, to educate about foster care and invite support for our foster parents
- Closed facebook page set up by foster parents to network with one another