

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS and RESPONSES

Focus group sessions were held with biological parents, youth, foster parents, and Agency staff (social workers and supervisors).

Questions were posed in each of the major CWS outcome areas—safety, permanence, and well-being.

Below are the questions and responses arranged by safety, permanence and well-being and sorted into three categories

- **R-Research**—those that seem to offer opportunities for research
- **E-Education**—those that offer the Agencies opportunities for further clarification of its activities to its constituents
- **O-Observation**—those that are general observations about the system that may or may not imply research, education, or advocacy responses

Responses in all three categories should be reviewed for possible inclusion in the areas for consideration in the other categories—in particular many of the E's and O's might be reshaped into compelling research questions)

After each response we note the source of the response (**B**-Biological parents, **Y**-Youth, **F**-Foster Parents, **S**-Staff from the Agency

SAFETY

Questions:

What questions do you have about how the child welfare works to keep children from being abused and neglected?

What questions do you have about how the child welfare system works when they find out a child has been abused or neglected?

Responses:

Research

- Does anybody know whether parenting classes work?--**B**
- Why don't they have age appropriate parenting classes?—**B**
- Are their parenting classes to help parents deal with the trauma of coming from foster care?--**B**
- Are there tools help you deal with traumatized children returning from foster care?-**B**
- Do peer to peer kids group work and do people use it?—**B**
- Does welcome home baby take parenting to next level? Eg. What to do with toddlers.—**B**

- How can foster parents deal with children with different values? Eg. Doing chores etc?--**B**
- What is the best way to handle children that have different rules in different homes? Eg. Foster care, custody--**B**
- How to handle the effect on children and parents when children are in wealthy foster homes and come home without the pool, dog, etc?--**B**
- How do parents know how to get it right? --**B** How can you make mandatory therapy work for core issues?(trust issue)--**B**
- How many kids put back into FMs, come back into care? How many times do the worker's visit? (From ESC-FM)--**F**
- Look at different foster parent training curricula to see if it affects outcomes.--**F**
- Why is there a shortage of Foster Parents--**F**
- How to promote training without food and prizes?--**F**
- What are ethnically appropriate placements? How is that decision made?--**F**
- Perception of foster homes is bad- Why is that the case and what can be done about it?—**F**
- Does Parent mentoring work? (Shared Family Care)--**F**
- What happens to the long-term well-being of children returned home. 5 years after the system has gone?--**F**
- It costs FP to foster children; What does it cost to care for a foster child?--**F**
- Research about: assessment tools. If we had better outcomes that SDM will use CAT tool affect our outcomes in a negative way.--**S**
- How can I tell if the trauma of removing a child is better/worse than the child at home (balancing effect of trauma).--**S**
- Are there behavioral indicators re-trauma--**S**
- What kind of emotional abuse are we causing the children by removing them?--**S**
- Is the emotional abuse more traumatic than sexual abuse?--**S**
- How to assess risk to siblings?—**S**
- What is going on with passive/ willing children when they willingly go with Social Workers?--**S**
- What should a SW do with a traumatic child-They bond to us so quickly, what should we do?—**S**
- How honest should the SW be with a child about where they are going?—**S**
- How do hospitals and other professionals decide to report? What types of soci-economic factors play?—**S**
- How does the system know a kid is safe in foster care? (Social worker only comes to visit once a month).--**Y**
- What is the proof that a child is being neglected?--**Y**
- How do you approach young kids on the subject of abuse? (put wire taps on kids- listen for sounds of abuse)--**Y**

Education

- What do you do to keep children safe from abuses neglect? Prior to and after reports?--**B**
- Why do we keep them separate? FP and Parents--**B**
- What does the system do to prepare children to go home?--**B**
- How would I know how my child is doing in foster care?—**B**
- How does the system determine mandatory therapy?--**B**
- How can parents really disclose in therapy? When it will show up in the court report?—**B**
- Would be helpful to understand court: papers, big words--**B**
- How do they collect information for the court report?--**B**
- Why doesn't children's attorney like to talk to us or like us?--**B**
- How can our attorney represent us if they only talk to us for 5 min before court? How do they prepare?—**B**
- How do parents know they can call their attorney?--**B**
- How can a missed drug test (not even dirty) mess things up so much?--**B**
- Why do they put young children in residential care when we know relapse rates? Especially within the first 30 days. --**F**
- Why does SW put such a "sunny" spin on the parents?--**F**
- What is the accountability of the SW to visit FP and parents?--**F**
- What are the expectations of SW during the visit?--**F**
- When bringing children into the system the families need a true account of the system?--**F**
- Why does PRIDE have its current class focus? Focus on crafts and not the legal system.--**F**
- Why are you only required to have 8 hrs of training per year and no one tracks its.--**F**
- Why does the system over look bad foster homes? Would rather place there than not have any homes.—**F**
- How are (visitation?) exceptions granted?--**F**
- Parents don't need to keep the same standards as foster parents.--**F**
- What does zero tolerance mean? For DV and AOD and across cultural lines.—**S**
- What is MSLC- how is it defined?--**S**

Observation

- How can parents learn how "rules" of child abuse prior to coming into the system? Parent training prior to having the child "How to spank appropriate etc". --**B**
- Class needed to help parents integrate foster parents parenting styles into their own?--**B**
- Why can't parents pick a foster home that shares their values?—**B**
- Why can't there be a team? Parents, foster parents, and child to transition. Open communication.—**B**
- Why does the system drop the ball?--**F**
- Can the agency pay FP to go to training?—**F**

- System is for the parents, not the safety if the child—**F**

WELL-BEING

Questions:

What questions do you have about the child welfare system takes care of children involved in it?

How about services? What questions do you have about the services that are offered to children in the child welfare system?

Responses:

Research

- How can parents be there emotionally for their child in foster care?--**B**
- Is there a difference in outcomes if the parents are involved in school, medical, appt sect?--**B**
- What is the impact of TDM's?--**B**
- Why does it differ so much from SW to SW? Effects outcomes: inconsistent decisions between social workers.--**B**
- Should SW's specialize with different age groups?--**B**
- Why cant families have one SW instead of several? After ER- should stick with the next one, lack of consistency.—**B**
- Why do FP's have to be so proactive to get services?--**F**
- Once a child leaves foster care, what happens? What services do they need?--**F**
- Do they need more SW's?--**F**
- What is the role of FP's in training SW's?--**F**
- What is the impact of FP working with bio parents? What is the right time?--**F**
- Why aren't they taking success stories and replecating them? --**F**
- What can't FP establish their own boundaries with parents? Not up to the individual SW changes to the rules with each worker—**F**
- Are the services provided by interns for therapy less effective than licensed therapist?--**S**
- Timing around placing kids in AOD treatment- What are the key factors we should assess.—**S**
- SW accessibility to research. What does it mean to bridge research and practice? How do you have time? What is the most effective way to get research to SW.?---**S**

- How do we know the services are effective in reducing child abuse and neglect? --**S**
- What is the relationship between meeting all the case plan objectives and what happens to the child. How do we know if they(the parents) got it?--**S**
- What about the effectiveness of services they get on their own that aren't part of the case plans? EG. Church--**S**
- Can a SW do their job alone? Would a team approach make a better assessment?--**S**
- If a family can keep a child at home safely do they have a better outcome if they have a VFM or court?--**S**
- Are our decisions driven by case load size? Is this fair?--**S**
- What does it take to get SW's to participate in making changes to the system?--**S**
- Why are there more referrals etc. March/ May/ Oct?--**S**
- The role of the supervisor and manager, what is it? What should it be?—**S**
- Is a case review meeting with supervisors and managers effective in making decisions?—**S**
- Why aren't classes that bio parents take effective?--**Y**
- Why aren't bio parents services more structured?--**Y**
- Impact of recruitment campaigns for foster parents like on the side of buses, inside the bus, light-rails, light-rail stations, and penny saver.--**Y**
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Education

- How does the FP meet the child's emotional needs? Check in time, etc.--**B**
- How does the system ensure medical needs of the child are really being met? Rather than just routine check ups.--**B**
- When a parent makes a complaint does the SW have to get back to you?--**B**
- Is there a criterion to respond? Expectations for SW and FP.--**B**
- Why couldn't I visit on X-mas and Thanksgiving?--**B**
- What does the SW do to prepare the child for moving? Why were they moved? What do they say to the child? Why isn't the parent told?--**B**
- What is the role of the SW especially in hospital setting? Positive toxicology, why can't we see baby?--**B**
- How thoroughly are these FPs screened? How come the SW didn't see what the parents saw in visits? What kind of training do they get? What medications can they give?—**B**
- Why isn't there more respite available?—**F**
- Why can't FPs do more on their own w/o SW and Court? Eg. Educational rights.—**F**
- Who decides what neglect is?--**Y**
- Why don't you put wire taps on little kids?--**Y**

- Why are they trying harder to keep kids out of their homes than keeping them in their homes?--**Y**
- Why are they trying to keep kids out of the home for longer rather than outing them back with family members that might (or do) want them?--**Y**
- Why does the system sometimes remove some of the kids out of the home but not all of the kids? (I.e. leaving older siblings, taking younger ones)—**Y**
- Why can't we choose to change social workers?--**Y**
- Why do foster kids have only certain hours they can be out doing things (i.e. home before 6PM)?--**Y**
- Why is therapy mandatory for foster kids if they don't want to go?--**Y**
- Why do therapists ask you questions that they already know the answer to? (I.e. your foster mom says...)?--**Y**
- Why is everyone talking behind my back (support counselors, therapist, foster parents, judges...)?--**Y**
- Why can't they transfer fingerprints from Alameda County to Sacramento?--**Y**
- Why don't foster parents split the money with the kids 50/50?--**Y**
- Why don't relatives get paid the same amount of money?--**Y**
- Why don't teens get a larger allowance per week?--**Y**

Observation

- How come some workers give options and others don't? How come some people get to sit down and have an opinion about their case plan?—**B**
- Parents feel confused and over powered.--**B**
- Feels like it comes out of SW's pocket to get services. Eg glasses etc. Regional services.--**F**
- Why don't SW's know about the services available? E.g Suitcases.--**F**
- Why don't kids have photos of themselves? Health records.--**F**
- How do we keep kids going on without any mementos? Eg. Life books--**F**
- Why do they make it so hard to adopt?—**F**
- Once you are in the system can't do social things?--**Y**
- Why doesn't the receiving home keep children in their previous school?—**Y**
- Why can't I get braces in foster care?--**Y**
- Why don't all social workers know all the services that are available to foster youth?--**Y**
- Why are the social workers rules (i.e. taking light rail) different for all kids in foster care?—**Y**
- Why doesn't my social worker call me? I have to call her. One question can take three weeks or more to get an answer?--**Y**
- Why do social workers make decisions based on their own feelings (if social workers get into fights (verbal) with bio-mom, kids do not get to visit with bio-mom).--**Y**
- Why didn't anyone tell me I have a lawyer? (After being in foster care for 15 years). Who is she/he?--**Y**

- Why don't I know exactly what ILP does?--Y
- Agencies should do more to recruit and selection of foster parents.--Y
- Tell foster parents what to expect more with foster youth, like information on their home life....Y
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PERMANENCE

Questions:

What questions do you have about how the child welfare system provides for a stable home for children in foster care?

What questions do you have about how the child welfare system gives kids a permanent living situation?

Responses:

Research

- Relationships between recovery and reunification.--B
- Roles of programs that allow for reunification and recovery. Is substance abuse different than DV or other issues?--B
- Should Substance Abuse programs be longer?--B
- How can programs decide whom to work with?--B
- Some programs make reunifications work.--B
- What is the effect of screening and referral process for AOD. Centralized access program.--B
- Does concurrent (planning) homes work, is it misleading?--F
- ESC homes that are asked to adopt children? Why is "back-dooring" a bad thing?--F
- Age restrictions for Adopt/Concurrent. FP's yet allow ESC to adopt at the same age.—F
- Difference between FFA's FP's and Co FP's?--F
- Coordination with regional center?--F
- Impact of direct communication from court to child, FP should be aware so they can help nurture and guide child.--F
- Why do relatives have to go thru formal CPS system to get help? Have to say "I can't take care of child?" How many relatives have to give up kids to get help?—F
- Are we sure that is really bad for kids to stay in LTFC?--S
- Why don't we have more kids with family?—S
- Why do we place teenagers in group homes based on age?—S

- What are the resources that are necessary for FP to take more teens?—**S**
- What are the relationships between socio-economics factors, culture and ethnicity, factors and outcomes? Why?--**S**
- Is the pattern of disproportionality based on SW bias or cultural norms? Is it something we do, the family does or society?--**S**
- What is the child/youths perspective of being in different parts of our system (ER, FM, FR, PP)?--**S**
- What is the child/youth's perspective with the maze of legal definitions.--**S**
- By being a legalistic system does this do more harm for children and families?--**S**
- What is the community? Who is it? Does it exist?—**S**
- Why don't SW's trust the system they work in? EG a referral on their own family.—**S**
- Why do you get kicked out every time you do something wrong, even if you broke a rule you didn't know about?--**Y**
- Why are you locked up in the receiving home?--**Y**
- Why is it so hard to get out of a group home?--**Y**
- Why does the group home decide when you are ready?--**Y**
- What about the impact it (out of county placement) has on us, the youth?—**Y**
- Who is checking to see if it is affecting us when we move from our home county? (I.e. feeling alone).--**Y**
- What is the impact of putting a "city kid" in the country?--**Y**
- Why don't they ask youth if your social worker is doing a good job? (I.e. evaluation form)!!!!—**Y**
- What is better for teens? Adoption? Permanent placement? We don't know so what is best for us.--**Y**
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Education

- How/when/why do they get to terminate parental rights? Many different workers?--**B**
- Why do they say fewer than 3 and over 3 times lines (early termination policies)?—**B**
- Role of parent partner program? —**B**
- How does the system differentiate between different types of foster homes?--**F**
- Why is reunification the preference? Especially for families who we won't reunify.--**F**
- What services are in place for emancipating foster youth? —**F**
- FP payment, why does payment go with status of FP (specialized program) vs. needs of the child. Especially for relative placement.--**F**
- Why do services end out at adoption if need persists, respite for example, ILP, financial assistance for college.—**F**
- Why doesn't the system help you do well in school?--**Y**

- Why can't I stay the night at my own family's house?--**Y**
- Why do kids get punished for other people's decisions? (I.e. someone retires or quits from being a foster parent?)--**Y**
- Why does the system place youth out of their home county?--**Y**

Observation

- Can take 4 months to get into a program and their 6 months is gone. 15 beds, 100 on lists. --**B**
- Social workers not communicating or working together to help children.--**F**
- Level of respect for foster parents from SW's.--**F**
- Not treated as professional but invites to be part of the team (language vs. reality)--**F**
- Adoption affects housing subsidies.--**F**
- Need for post-adoption services and support for parents. --**F**
- Should families be assessed at a different level from Foster Parents? Re-undocumented, sharing a bedroom, criminal history etc.--**S**
- Why do we pay FP's so little?—**S**
- Why does a month in the receiving home feel like a year?--**Y**
- Why is the receiving food so bad?--**Y**
- Why do they ask you what kind of permanent family you want when they don't seem to take that into consideration in a placement?—**Y**
- Ask teens if they even want to be adopted.--**Y**
- Help us to emancipate successfully and have housing to live in.--**Y**