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## Working Paper Series

### Professionalization of Foster Parenting

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Greater professionalization of foster parenting has been one of the ways in which the substitute care system has attempted to respond to the growing shortages of foster homes in the 1980's. The pilot study being reported here was designed to explore foster parents' views of the parenting and work aspects of their role in the context of professionalization. The study also elicited recommendations from foster parents for improving the substitute care system which regulates their activities in this role.

A variety of sources have documented the nationwide shortages of foster homes in the face of rising numbers of children in need of substitute care (e.g. Children's Defense Fund, 1988; General Accounting Office, 1989a, 1989b; Kamerman & Kahn, 1989; William T. Grant Foundation, 1988). The shortage of foster homes is believed to reflect a shrinking pool of volunteers and a high attrition rate among those recruited and licensed to become foster parents. The problems of foster parent shortage is compounded by poor qualifications and low morale among those in the system (Crisis in Foster Care, 1990).

Many reasons have been cited to explain the shrinking pool of volunteers high turnover rate, poor qualifications, and low morale (General Accounting Office, 1989b; Kamerman & Kahn, 1989; Maluccio & Sinanoglu 1981). Chief among them is the entry of large numbers of women into the paid labor force since the 1970's. Traditionally, homemakers have been the primary source of substitute care providers. With more women working for pay outside the home, there are fewer volunteers to become foster parents, even though outside employment does not disqualify one from becoming a foster parent. The rising divorce rate has also been seen as a factor in diminishing the traditional pool of foster parents

Other factors often cited to explain the current shortage of foster homes are lack of respect accorded foster parents by case workers, the courts and other professionals (Pasztor & Burgess, 1982); low reimbursement rates which force many foster parents to finance a foster child's daily living expenses out-of-pocket (Campbell & Downs, 1987); the difficulty of finding respite care to give foster parents even brief spells from what is otherwise a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week job (Terpstra, 1987); difficulty in obtaining liability insurance for damages or losses to property by foster children and against charges of misconduct, as foster parents appear to be at risk for allegations of physical and sexual abuse (General Accounting Office, 1989b); insufficient training to handle the complex issues of separation and loss in the children they foster who leave their parents, in themselves when the foster children leave, and the birth families who have been separated from their children (Boyd & Remy, 1979); lack of training for giving care to increasing numbers of special needs children who need substitute care (e.g., children with serious medical problems, HIV positive babies, or children born to substance abusing parents) (General Accounting Office, 1989b); and overworked and inaccessible case workers (General Accounting Office, 1989b)

Finally, there is the unintended effect of foster care reform laws Public Law 96-272, the Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980, was passed to encourage preventive services for keeping families together, speedy reunification with birth parents if foster placement is inevitable, and permanency plans for the foster child within 18 months. It was intended to discourage unnecessary placement of children out of their homes, for excessively long periods of time often involving moves from one foster home to another without permanency planning. Unfortunately, it has contributed to a

negative perception of foster placements and a subsequent devaluation of foster parents' much needed services (Kamerman & Kahn, 1989)

One of the ways the child welfare establishment has responded to the growing shortages of foster parents is by cultivating a sense of professionalism among foster parents through training and education as well as greater clarification of the foster parent roles (General Accounting Office 1989b; Pasztor & Burgess, 1982). In Massachusetts where the study was carried out, since the mid-1980's, there has been a move to ameliorate the conditions of poor qualifications and low morale by creating a sense of professionalism among foster parents in substance as well as in name. The state has attempted to address the training issues, compensation for services, and the devaluation many foster parents feel by elevating their status to professional parents who are partners with the state agency in the care of children who need substitute care

The substantive changes are most evident in, but not limited to, the area of training and education. All foster parents receive a minimum of 10 sessions of preservice training called Massachusetts Approach to Partnership in Parenting (MAPP) which is taught jointly by a caseworker and a foster parent.' The course covers not only the basic rules and regulations governing foster care but also the issues of loss and separation, dealing with birth parents, confidentiality, and child development. Additional courses on a variety of topics such as dealing with substance abuse by one's foster child, performing medical procedures necessary to give care to sick children, or raising self esteem is widely available as inservice training to foster parents throughout the state in both English and in Spanish. Trained foster parents are eligible to receive additional compensation for providing court-

mandated specialized services called P.A.C.T (Parents and Children Together) Extraordinary out-of-pocket expenses are also reimbursable if there is pre-authorization

The Department of Social Services (DSS) under whose jurisdiction the regulation of substitute care falls in Massachusetts, publishes a newsletter mailed to all foster parents called The Professional Parent. Moreover, the name of the voluntary organization on foster care is the Massachusetts Association for Professional Foster Care (MAPFC) Among other services, MAPFC offers a respite exchange program and a liaison service to facilitate and expedite foster parents access to DSS.

It appears that these remedies have worked because Massachusetts does not have an overall shortage of foster homes (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, DSS, personal communication, 1990) However, spot shortages in a few communities continue to exist in Massachusetts because DSS has a policy of attempting to match the race and ethnicity of a child with that of the foster family and to place a child as close to his/her own neighborhood as possible

In spite of the visible success of the greater professionalization of foster parenting in Massachusetts, in this state and across the U.S. some aspects of foster parents' status remains ambiguous because they are neither parents nor professionals. In reality, being a foster parent, which is basically a volunteer activity, is at the intersection of the private world of parenting and the public world of professional work. Yet, in their roles as care givers to other people's children, foster parents have neither the privacy protection, rights, and privileges generally accorded to parents and other legal guardians nor do they get full financial compensation for their labor as do other people who are professionally employed Foster parents'

work is highly regulated by rules and regulations pertaining to substitute care and also by the court orders governing the care of the children they agree to foster. Their performance is routinely scrutinized and evaluated by child welfare workers who make home visits. For all of this, they get no pay but nominal compensation for their foster child's basic living expenses. Compensation rates vary from a low of \$130 a month for a two-year-old in Mississippi to \$565 a month for a 16-year-old in Alaska (American Public Welfare Association, cited in General Accounting Office, 1989b p. 16)

The issue of compensation is at the root of one of the sources of ambiguity surrounding the status of foster parents. At one extreme of the debate surrounding monetary compensation is the view that foster parents are parents first and foremost. They ought to be providing their services out of love for children. Any money which enters into the fostering relationship commercializes and taints the process. At the other extreme is the view that foster parents provide a socially valued service which requires skill, training, and supervision. They ought to be compensated for their work as salaried professionals with a regular paycheck and benefits.

The study being reported here explores the issues of professionalization and compensation of foster parents by examining foster parents' views of the satisfactions and problems with the parent as well as the work facets of the foster parent role.

## METHODS

### Sample

A total of 54 foster parents (41 foster mothers and 13 foster fathers) took part in the study representing, 41 foster homes. Five of these homes were homes of relatives which had become licensed foster homes to care for a

known child who was either a relative or a close friend of the family. The rest were "unrestricted" homes which are licensed to accept any children in need of care.<sup>2</sup>

It was not possible to obtain a listing of all licensed foster homes in the state from which to draw a random sample because of the confidentiality laws governing the identity of foster homes, foster children, and birth parents. Therefore, respondents were recruited through established networks of foster parents such as regional offices of DSS, the voluntary state association (MAPFC), and private foster care agencies throughout the state. To avoid restricting the sample to an inner circle of well-known foster parents, we adopted a method of skipping links in the network. In other words, whenever we were given the name of a foster family for possible inclusion in the sample, we did not interview foster parents in that family but we contacted the family that they, in turn, referred us to. Approximately 30 percent of the families in the skipped links refused to give us names of foster families they knew of because of a concern for breaking confidentiality. However, only one family which was intended to be interviewed refused to take part in the study. This extremely low refusal rate gives us confidence that the sample is not overly biased in favor of foster parents who have the time or willingness to talk about their experiences. Moreover, we were also able to avoid a geographical bias by including in the sample foster parents from all of the state's five DSS regions.

Seventy one percent of the foster parents reported that children were placed in their homes through DSS, 21 percent through private agencies which work in partnership with DSS and are publicly funded, and 8 percent through

privately funded private agencies. The sample's median years of experience being a foster parent was 6, with a range from less than one year to 28 years. They had fostered a median of 16 children, with a range from one to 400. The average number of foster children in the home at the time of the interview was 2. Thirteen percent of the sample identified themselves as African Americans, 16 percent as Hispanic, 6 percent as American Indian, and 65 percent as Caucasian. The average family income, excluding foster care payments, was reported to be in the \$20,000 to \$29,000 range. The characteristics of the sample are comparable to the profile of foster parents state wide (Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Social Services, personal communication, 1990; Muise, Taylor, & Felix, 1989).

#### Procedures

Respondents were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in a survey of foster parents' views of their rewards and challenges in being a foster parent. When they agreed to take part in the study, they were asked to make an appointment for a telephone interview for which they would be compensated \$10 for their time. Respondents were mailed a copy of the questionnaire and were asked to have the questionnaire in front of them for the telephone interview. (Spanish-speaking foster parents were asked if they wanted the Spanish version of the questionnaire mailed to them). During the interview, the interviewer read each one of the questions over the telephone and recorded the respondents answers. The interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes. Spanish-speaking foster parents were interviewed by a bilingual interviewer in Spanish when they indicated they wanted the interview to be carried out in Spanish.

### Interview Schedule

A structured interview schedule with closed ended questions was developed in consultation with foster parents and social service professionals. The consultations were elicited in a focus group format. The questionnaire went through numerous revisions as a result of feedback received from five different focus groups. The interview schedule included questions on foster parents' foster care history, the types of children they have fostered, different services they have provided, the rewards and problems they experience in their role as parents of foster children and in their work as foster parents (adapted from Barnett and Marshall 1989), their relationship with the agency and case workers, their training history, and the changes they would like to see implemented in the foster care system

### RESULTS

Respondents were asked to think about their work as foster parents and to rate how much of a reward different aspects of their work was to them. On a scale of one to four, where four indicated a given aspect was extremely rewarding, respondents gave highest ratings to "Having an impact on other people's lives," "The sense of accomplishment and competence you get from being a foster parent," and "Teaching others to help themselves" (see Table 1)

They were asked to rate how much of a concern different problematic aspects of their work as foster parents are to them. The following problems were given the highest concern ratings: "Not knowing what happens to your foster children after they leave," "The thought that your foster children can leave with little notice," "Not being able to get your job done as a foster parent because of other people or red tape," and "Being reimbursed less money

than you think foster parenting deserves." In general the "rewards" items received higher ratings than the items concerning problems with the work role (see tables 1 and 2)

Using the same rating format, foster parents were asked to think of their parenting role and rate how much of a reward different aspects of being a parent to foster children was to them. The most rewarding aspects of the parent role were "Seeing your foster children grow and change," "The pleasure you get from your foster children's accomplishments," "The love they show you," and "The meaning and purpose they give your life" (see Table 3) The following received the highest concern ratings as problematic aspects of the parenting role "Your foster children's safety when they are away from you," "Your foster children returning upset from parental visits," and "your foster children not being happy." In general, items concerning rewards of the parenting role received higher ratings than the items associated with the problems of being a parent to foster children (see tables 3 and 4)

In line with generally higher ratings given to rewards as opposed to problems in both the work and parenting aspects of being a foster parent, the overall rating of satisfaction was 6.7, on a scale of one through eight, where a score of eight indicated being completely satisfied. Fifty-four percent answered "yes," in response to being asked if they ever considered quitting being a foster parent but, of those who answered affirmatively, only two people said they were considerably or extremely likely to quit.

Regarding their relationships with the agency and case workers, 27 percent of the sample claimed to have had problems with their family resource worker (home finder). The most frequently cited problems were phone calls not returned, the family resource worker's lack of respect for them and their

work, and not being told of agency policies and regulations. Fifty percent of the respondents reported having problems with their foster children's case worker. Most frequently given examples of these problems were not being consulted about decisions regarding the foster child telephone calls not being returned, and one's advice being ignored. Additionally, 52 percent reported that the agency had not given important information on a child which they later found they had--information which would have influenced whether they would have accepted the child or how they cared for the child.

When asked whether changes in the foster care system in Massachusetts enacted in the 1980's (e.g., MAPP training, reimbursement for specialized services (P.A.C.T.), establishment of the Massachusetts Association of Professional Foster Care, open adoptions) made improvements in the lives of foster parents, 28 percent of the respondents answered, "definitely yes," 48 percent said, "somewhat," and 2 percent said, "definitely no," and 22 percent reported they did not have enough information to make a comparative judgment

When asked if foster care payments cover the children's living expenses, 17 percent said, "Yes," 44 percent said, "Sometimes," and 39 percent said, "No." Those who indicated they spent money out-of-pocket at least some of the time, reported spending the extra money most frequently on clothing, toys and gifts, food or baby formula, toiletries and medication not covered by Medicaid, and entertainment

Fully 93 percent of the respondents reported that in their judgment the public is misinformed about foster parents. The following were endorsed as the most frequently encountered misconceptions: "Foster parents are in it for the money," "It's an easy job," "Foster parents must be crazy to want to take care of kids their parents don't want," and "Foster parents must be saints to

take care of kids nobody else wants

Seventy-four percent of the foster parents reported receiving training before becoming a foster parent and 65 percent reported receiving specialized training after becoming a foster parent. The most frequently cited specialized inservice training received was on the behavioral effects of sexual abuse--reported by 50 percent of the respondents.

Foster parents were given a list of 12 ideas put forth by foster parent advocates and were asked to pick three which would make the most improvements in their lives or to list their own recommendations for improvement. In Table 5 are listed the recommendations and the percentage of respondents who endorsed them. Recommendations endorsed by most respondents were increasing foster parents' daily reimbursement rates, increasing foster children's clothing allowance, training social workers to have a better idea of what is involved in being a foster parent, and training judges and other professionals in the legal system about child development and foster care. Training, certifying, and paying foster parents as child care workers was picked by the fewest number of respondents.

#### DISCUSSION

The overall pattern of results show that the professionalization thrust instituted in Massachusetts since the mid-1980's has been successful. In spite of the fact that they identify some of the very same problems with the foster care system which have been discussed in the foster care literature (e.g. lack of respect accorded foster parents by case workers, the courts, and the public; low reimbursement rates; and inaccessible case workers), sample of foster parents report close to complete satisfaction with being a foster parent. They also report that they are unlikely to drop out.

explanation of this phenomenon is that the substantive and name changes toward greater professionalization have had their intended effect. An alternative explanation is that the skipped-link network sampling procedure produced a biased sample predisposed to be favorable to being foster parents. However we are skeptical that the results obtained are entirely, or even primarily, due to the biased nature of the sample because respondents were not at all reluctant to point to the existence of problems wherever they saw them. Nevertheless, a survey of randomly selected sample of foster parents would be a welcome addition to the literature in this field.

With respect to more specific findings regarding professionalization, comparisons of the rewards and problems of the work and parenting roles of being a foster parent show that foster parents perceive much greater rewards in both roles than problems and the parenting role is even more rewarding than the work role of being a foster parent.

What they find rewarding about the parenting aspect of being a foster parent are what most people identify as the satisfactions associated with having children. Similarly parenting aspects identified as most problematic are similar to what most parents view as worrisome--of course, foster children returning upset from parental visits is unique to foster families but worrying that one's children will be upset is something most parents do.

The rewards of the work role reflect a sense of pride over a job well-done as a parent as well as having an opportunity to help people. The rewarding aspects of foster parenting having to do with the work role are similar to the reactions found among professionals in the human services/helping professions field. Barnett and Marshall (1991) report that in their sample of female social workers and licensed practical nurses

"helping others," and "having an impact on other people's lives" were among the items which received the highest reward ratings. Problems with the foster parent work role reflect difficulties in coming to terms with abrupt loss which is an artifact of the way foster parents' relationships with their foster children can be terminated under the present system. They also reflect resentment over institutional obstacles which come in the way of doing their job well: other people, red tape, or low reimbursement rates.

Importance of the parenting aspects of the foster parent role was also reflected in the types of recommendations made for improvement. The recommendations are for changes which would facilitate being a parent without self-sacrifice, not those which would change foster parents's status to employees.

It appears that foster parents who were recruited and trained under current rules and regulations governing the activities of foster parents, view themselves first and foremost as parents. They value the parenting aspects of their role in ways similar to the sentiments of other parents. What they find problematic about their work role is institutional structures which interfere with their being effective foster parents. Because the majority of them report making out-of-pocket expenditures at least some of the time, the low reimbursement rates are problematic to them because it interferes with their parenting.

The results suggest that foster parents welcome the greater professionalization accorded their status in terms of the increased opportunities for training and want more respect for foster parents from the courts, the general public, and agency professionals. However, they are not interested in becoming professionalized to the extent of becoming paid.

employees. It seems clear that foster parents are not interested in a status which would increase their involvement with a bureaucracy. They want greater professionalization but not greater bureaucratization.

Implications of these findings for future developments in foster parents' professionalization are to continue the existing thrust in providing training to foster parents, upgrading the public image of foster parents, training legal and social services professionals to have a better understanding of what is involved in being a foster parent, and increasing reimbursement rates.

New initiatives in professionalization should consider that foster parents think of themselves primarily as parents. Through their daily care giving activities, foster parents come to know their foster children's needs, strengths, and weaknesses in a deeper and more comprehensive way than others in the foster care system. Currently, there are no formal mechanisms for including this wealth of information into the process of foster children's permanency planning. This is because, whereas foster parents have been given the care giving responsibility, the foster care agency and the courts hold a monopoly on decision making. Birth parents and legal guardians have both the responsibility to take care of their children's needs--that is, the responsibility for making decisions regarding caring activities, and also the responsibility of giving direct care.<sup>3</sup> Foster parents are frustrated that not only do they not have the decision making responsibilities, their advice is not sought, nor taken when they offer it. Creating at least an advisory role for foster parents in permanency planning would strengthen their parental role and, very likely, the quality of care foster children receive.

Also, more psychologically sound procedures for terminating the foster care relationship--such as providing adequate time to say good-bye to

different members of the foster family--when the court decides to reunite a child with his/her birth family would both strengthen foster parents parenting role and have a beneficial effect on the emotional well-being of foster children

#### CONCLUSION

Future developments in professionalization should take into consideration that foster parents want neither to care for children with out-of-pocket money just for the love children, nor do they want to be trained and certified to become paid employees. Rather, they want all the support they can get, financial and otherwise, to be the best parents they can be to children who need out of home placement. Reverby (1990) has commented that, historically the central problem in the professionalization of nursing was to find a way to care without self-sacrifice. Almost a century later, foster parents are voicing their opinions that they, too, want to care without self-sacrifice, with minimal bureaucratization, and with the training and respect accorded all professionals

## NOTES

1. MAPP training as a mandatory preservice, pre-licensing, selection vehicle has been instituted in the mid-1980's for foster to be licensed by DSS. DSS foster parents who had been licensed before that time were encouraged to take this training and many have.

2. In Massachusetts the term "unrestricted" is used to distinguish foster homes from "restricted" homes which only accept a child previously known to the family. For example, if a child is in need of substitute care, DSS first checks to see if there are relatives who can take the child. If there are, and they are deemed suitable by DSS criteria, the relative's home becomes licensed as a "restricted" foster home. "Unrestricted" foster homes have no prior acquaintance with the children they may take in. On the other hand, parents who volunteer to be licensed as "unrestricted homes" do have the right to specify they type of children they would like to foster--e.g., infants, or adolescents, or HIV positive children.

3. Fisher and Tronto (1990), in their formulation of a feminist theory of caring, make a distinction among four components of caring: caring about, taking care of, care giving, and care receiving. Caring about involves paying attention to a matter which needs care. Taking care of involves taking responsibility for initiating and maintaining caring activities. Care giving is the concrete work of providing care which is often hands-on work. Care receiving is the response to care giving by those toward whom care is directed. The authors note that, "for women caregivers, the fragmentation between caregiving and taking care of is particularly problematic...because...the constraints of professionalization often limit caregivers' attention to a narrow sphere, so that it becomes difficult for them to approach a situation 'holistically' " (p. 44).1

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Table 1.  
RATINGS OF REWARDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE WORK OF BEING A FOSTER PARENT

<u>REWARDS OF THE WORK OF BEING A FOSTER PARENT</u>	<u>AVERAGE RATING</u>
Having an impact on other peoples' lives	
The sense of accomplishment and competence one gets	
Teaching others to help themselves	3.2
Being needed by others	
Helping troubled parents by taking care of their children	
The job's fitting your skills	
Doing challenging and stimulating work	
Your work contributing to the good of the larger community	
The sense of family you get from having foster children	
Working at home	
Having a variety of tasks	
The freedom to decide how you do your work	
Opportunity to meet many new people	
Being able to make decisions on your own	
The recognition you get from being a foster parent	

1

Rated on a four-point scale where, 1=not at all rewarding; 2=somewhat rewarding; 3=considerably rewarding; and 4=extremely rewarding.

Table 2.  
RATINGS OF PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH WORK AS A FOSTER PARENT

<u>PROBLEMS OF THE WORK OF BEING A FOSTER PARENT</u>	<u>AVERAGE RATING</u>
Not knowing what happens to your foster children after they leave	
The thought that your foster children can leave with little notice	
Not being able to get your job done as a foster parent because of other people or red tape	
Being reimbursed less money than you think foster parenting deserves	
The knowledge that the children in your care are there temporarily, and that they will leave	
Having to deal with emotionally difficult situations	
Not having full parental authority over your foster children	
Having to do things against your better judgment	
Having limited opportunity to teach your values to your foster children	
Lack of respect in the community for people who are foster parents	
Possibility that you or someone in your house could be accused of sexually or physically abusing your foster child	
Having to do tasks you don't feel should be part of your job	
Not being clear what the agency expects of foster parents	
Having too much to do	
The work being physically strenuous	
Having to care for children who have already developed food and language habits you do not approve of	
The agency's lack of appreciation for your work	1.7
Difficult relationship with your foster children's case worker	1.7
Losing the privacy of your home	1.7
Having your property damaged by your foster children	
The agency's unrealistic expectations of your work	1.6

Rated on a four-point scale where, 1=not at all a concern; 2=somewhat of a concern; 3=considerably a concern; and 4=extremely a concern.

Table 3  
RATINGS OF REWARDS OF THE PARENTING ASPECT OF BEING A FOSTER PARENT

<u>REWARDS OF THE PARENTING ASPECT</u>	<u>AVERAGE RATING</u> <sup>1</sup>
Seeing your foster children grow and change	
The pleasure you get from your foster children's accomplishments	3.6
The love they show you	
The meaning and purpose they give your life	
Being an important care taker for them--being special	3.3
Your foster children liking you as a person	3.3
Seeing babies benefit from your care	
Your foster children helping you see the world in new ways	
Passing on to your foster children what you know and value	
Liking the kind of person they are	
Sharing interests and activities with them	3.1
The companionship they provide	2.9
The way they change you for the better	2.9
Your foster children valuing your opinion	2.8
The enjoyment of caring for babies	2.8
Being needed by the foster child(ren)	
Being able to count on them to help out	1.9
Opportunity to be a parent when you can't or don't have children of your own	

1

Rated on a four-point scale where, 1=not at all rewarding; 2=somewhat rewarding; 3=considerably rewarding; 4=extremely rewarding.

Table 4  
RATINGS OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE PARENTING ASPECT OF BEING A FOSTER PARENT

<u>PROBLEMS OF THE PARENTING ASPECT</u>	<u>AVERAGE RATING</u> <sup>1</sup>
Your foster children's safety when they are away from you	
Your foster children returning upset from parental visits	
Your foster children not being happy	
Your foster children's health right now	
Not being sure you are doing the right thing for them	2.1
Watching babies look uncomfortable when held by biological parents	
Getting caught in the middle of conflicts involving your foster children (e.g., with biological parents, the school, or their case worker)	2.
Their not doing well in school	
Your foster children having problems adjusting to your home	
The financial strain of having foster children	1.9
The trouble they might get into	1.9
Their choice of friends	
Their values and choices bother you	
Being blamed for your foster children's problems	
Feeling tied down because of your foster children	1.7
Your foster children not showing appreciation	1.7
Their not thinking enough about their future	1.7
Neighborhood peer group not accepting your foster children	
Their not doing their share of chores	
Your having too many arguments and conflicts with them	
Babies in your care not developing according to "average" norms	

1

Rated on a four-point scale where, 1=not at all a concern; 2=somewhat of a concern; 3=considerably a concern; 4=extremely a concern.

Table 5

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE FOSTER PARENTS' LIVES

(Percentage of foster parents who picked the recommendation as one of three which would make the most improvement in their lives)

<u>RECOMMENDATION</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
Increase foster parents' daily reimbursement rates	48
Increase clothing allowance for foster children	39
Train social workers to have a better idea of what is involved in foster parenting	30
Train judges and other professionals in the legal system about child development and foster care	28
Provide access to lawyers for foster parents who have had a neglect or abuse charge filed against them	26
Receiving state employee benefits (such as tuition reimbursement, health insurance, life insurance) in addition to daily reimbursement payments	18
Provide access to respite care which does not involve an exchange	19
Paying foster parents a salary and benefits as an employee	18
Organize a campaign to teach the public what is involved in foster parenting	17
Increase hourly payments to foster parents who provide specialized services	15
Increase the number of health care providers who accept medicaid	10
Train, certify, and pay foster parents as child care workers	6