

ARIZONA FOSTER PARENT FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Prepared by
The Arizona Department of Child Safety
in collaboration with
The National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids
April 2016

Purpose of Focus Groups

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) is in the process of improving the way it recruits, develops and supports resource families for the children they serve. In an effort to solicit ideas on how best to improve their current system, focus groups with newly licensed foster parents were held in Tucson and Phoenix. Using a method designed to solicit ideas for improvements, facilitators led focus group participants in an exercise to solicit ideas for improving DCS recruitment, orientation and ongoing support of foster parents.

Foster Parents provide a valuable service to the children and families they voluntarily serve and in doing so gain a wealth of knowledge on how the foster care system functions to meet the needs of children in care. Tapping into that knowledge base is critical when making improvements to a child welfare system and especially when making improvements to how foster parents are recruited, developed and supported.

Although system data and surveys provide valuable information to decision makers, focus groups allow for a more concentrated sharing of ideas and solutions that cannot be harvested from raw data. Hearing directly from foster parents firsthand is critical to any plan for changes in the system as foster parent focus groups can lead to ideas not gained through other forms of feedback.

Recruitment, Development and Support of Foster and Adoptive Parents

One area of concern for Arizona is the number of foster parents choosing to no longer foster. Though more than 40 percent of families close their licenses following the adoption of their foster children, a large number are leaving for other reasons. Each year Arizona loses almost as many foster parents as they gain.

Arizona is developing a new approach to how it retains foster families. For years, the child welfare field has talked about “retention” of foster and adoptive families, but the idea of retention has focused mainly on the needs of state agencies rather than the needs of families. The new approach focuses on actively developing and supporting both prospective and current foster and adoptive families, rather than focusing on retaining them. By meeting a family’s needs, state agencies increase their ability to address each child’s unique needs, while also strengthening their relationship with the child welfare system. The traditional view of retention suggests passively holding onto families, whereas development and support involves building and nurturing a relationship with families so that they continue to feel equipped to meet the needs of children and youth. Development begins at first contact with a family. As state agencies directly engage with individual families, they have the opportunity to learn more about what each family needs to feel supported and to build a positive relationship with the agency. By

building parents' skills and confidence, child welfare agencies not only help them feel supported, they also help ensure that their pool of families can meet the diverse and specific needs of children and youth in foster care.¹

The DCS has already improved the way it recruits foster families by implementing a strategy that uses marketing data based on their current successful foster parents to better target where potential fosters parents might be located and the types of recruitments efforts to which they would likely respond. With technical assistance provided by the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids (NRCDR), in August and September 2015 DCS implemented the new recruitment strategies based on market segmentation data. This new approach and their use of data in recruitment has helped Arizona to gain national attention. Their team consisting of Roxann L. Miller, Home Recruitment Marketing and Communication Specialist, Stephen Kibler Acting Recruitment Manager, Home Recruitment Study and Supervision Liaison, and Lucas Murray, Senior Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analyst, Arizona Department of Economic Security have presented their work with data on a national child welfare webinar and continue to be leaders and a source of support to their peers in other states.

Recognizing that development and support of foster families should be integrated into recruitment and viewed as an ongoing process by DCS, the team is now focused on improving the way DCS develops and supports resource families. In order to better meet the needs of foster parents the team decided to use the focus group method to gain insight and ideas. Three specific focus areas were selected for exploration with foster parents. The focus areas were recruitment, orientation and ongoing support.

Focus Groups

Scheduled Groups and Locations

A total of three focus groups were completed. Tucson and Phoenix were selected as locations with one group in Tucson (March 15, 2016) and two in Phoenix (March 16, 2016). For maximum participation, groups were scheduled from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

The Tucson group met in a conference room at GAP Ministries with nine (9) participants. The Phoenix groups were held in the DCS Central Office in two separate rooms with a total of forty 40 participants. Consultants from the NRCDR facilitated the sessions using flip charts, marker boards and markers to record participant ideas. DCS representatives introduced the sessions, handled logistics and took notes.

It was decided that foster parents who had been licensed for two years or less would be invited in each location. An email invitation was sent to families matching the criteria with instructions on how to register for the session. Some shared the invitation with other foster parents resulting in a few participants having as many as eight years of fostering experience. It was hoped that each group would include between ten to twenty individuals. Though registrations were much higher than this target, roughly half actually attended.

¹ <http://www.nrcdr.org/develop-and-support-families>

Methodology

The focus groups were purposely structured to seek solutions or improvements and not necessarily problem analysis. However, in seeking solutions problem areas did emerge in the discussions. The mythology helped focus participants on providing solutions to the problem areas.

Focus group leaders used a method from Ken Miller's book, "The Change Agent's Guide to Radical Improvement."² The approach was modified to better address the purpose intended in the DCS focus groups. The same three-step process listed below was repeated for each of the three focus areas: recruitment, orientation and ongoing support. All three steps were completed before moving to the next focus area.

Step 1: This step is designed to solicit ideas for improving the current system. Though all three focus specific questions are listed below, only one of the focus questions was asked and the remaining steps continued with that same focus area. All three steps are repeated in order for each focus area.

Facilitator: "I'd like to go around the room and ask each of you to offer one idea:

Recruitment Question: "If you could change one aspect about the way people are recruited to become foster parents in Arizona what would it be?" The facilitator clarified that this might include the content of messages given during recruitment or the way these messages are distributed.

Orientation Question: "If you could change one aspect about the orientation and the process of selecting your agency what would it be?" Facilitator clarified that this might include the setting or location of the orientation, the presentation method, and/or the content of the orientation such as setting realistic expectations, more information on the needs of the children, the steps and length of time it take to licensing a family.

Ongoing Support Question: Now that you're a licensed foster parent and have some experience caring for a child in your home, if you could change one aspect about the supports and customer service given to foster parents what would it be? Facilitator clarified that this might include how the staff communicates or coordinates with parents or supports that are offered to families.

Each person in the group provided an answer that was recorded on flip chart paper.

Step 2: In this step the group voted on their top five priorities from responses in Step 1.

Facilitator: "All of these answers are important, but I want to get an idea of what is most important to you. If you were to choose one of these to improve first, which would it be? I'll go through each one. Raise your hand if you think it should be the top priority? Please raise your hand for only one item. (If time allowed, "And if you could choose *one more* of these to improve first, what would it be? Again, raise your hand for only one item."

The top five priorities were selected from the list having the most cumulative votes from the group. In some focus areas less than five priorities were selected.

² The Change Agent's Guide to Radical Improvement, Miller, Ken. ASQ Quality Press, 2002.

Step 3: In this step the group is asked to go through the top priorities and focus on solutions or proposed accomplishments.

Facilitator: “Now let’s look at our top five and get more specific. I want to focus on solutions. What is one thing that can be done to accomplish this priority?” Starting with the first priority each participant was asked for one response. Answers were written on flip chart under that specific priority. Participants were allowed to refer to an answer which had already been mentioned. This process was repeated for each priority.

All three focus areas were addressed by the Tucson focus group while only two were addressed per group in the Phoenix sessions due to the increased size of the groups. One Phoenix group examined recruitment while the other orientation. All focus groups addressed ongoing support.

General Findings – What Was Learned

Focus group participants provided valuable information to the DCS team on what changes are needed to improve the recruitment, development and support of the resource parent population. In some ways the findings helped solidify the direction DCS is already headed and in others, the findings provide knowledge for possible new directions.

The following is a summation of the information obtained through the focus group process. Though the questions were asked of each group concerning a specific area of focus, responses easily overlapped into other areas. This reflects what was stated earlier that recruitment, development and support of foster parents are better viewed as connected processes. Two specific areas that overlapped all focus areas were licensing and selecting an agency. Rather than fit these responses into only one focus area or repeat in all, they have been listed separately.

Another subject that overlapped all three areas of focus was the use of the DCS website. Participants saw it as critical to all three areas. Since each focus area presented distinct suggestions for how to use the website, the information is presented within each focus area.

Recruitment

Two of the three focus groups provided ideas for improved recruitment of resource families. Seven distinct priorities were selected. Three priorities related to the licensing process and selection of an agency and are presented under those headings.

Three of the identified priority areas related to getting the message out to prospective foster parents. It was agreed that more recruitment is needed making the messages more visible and using the DCS website as a more effective recruitment tool.

Media

Participants provided a list of traditional forms of media recruitment such as bill boards, TV ads, brochures and event booths. They also suggest less traditional forms of media such as social media and advertising on the internet.

Messaging

Participants felt that recruitment messaging needed to be more consistent with like branding and content. This would include a central message or slogan shared by all recruiting agencies. They also felt that the messaging needed to be from the perspective of a foster parent, expressing appreciation for what foster parents provide. One parent said, "People need to see a more realistic approach or picture of who the children are and their needs ... what skills and supports are needed to be a foster parent." This they felt could be accomplished by having foster parents provide input on recruitment materials prior to distribution and participate in videos or other media telling their story as foster parents.

Community-Based

Participants also provided ideas on community-based recruitment that includes schools, community based organizations and churches. This they felt would be most effective if foster parents were part of community outreach efforts. To add to their effectiveness as recruiters, it was suggested that foster parents be provided tools to help them more effectively recruit. Some asked that families recruited by other foster parents be noted as such and more quickly engaged in follow-up.

Website

Focus group participants felt that changes needed to be made to the DCS website in order for it to be better utilized for recruitment. They saw the website as one of the best ways to get information to prospective foster parents on such things as the process for becoming a foster parent, information on the types of children in foster care, supports provided for foster parents, videos of foster parents describing their experiences, etc.

Further, they suggested a website dedicated to recruitment be established providing all information one would need to research being a foster parent. An accompanying app was another idea. In order to maintain the website, they suggested hiring a webmaster dedicated to recruitment.

Orientation

Nine distinct priorities were selected by the two groups that provided feedback on orientation. Four priorities related to content presented in the orientation while three priorities related to the overall structure and accessibility of orientations. Two priorities related to the licensing process and selection of an agency and presented under those headings.

Structure and Accessibility

As the subject was introduced, it was learned that a number of participants had not attended an orientation, but went straight to the licensing process. This led to a number of suggestions on improving the structure and accessibility of orientations as well as making orientations a requirement.

One theme that carried through many of the suggestions was consistency. In order to provide that consistency some suggested orientations be provided by DCS and not the licensing agencies. They also suggested there be an option for going through the orientation online.

Others addressed the issue of private agency held orientations being inconsistent by suggesting that DCS explore how licensing agencies structure orientations and work to make them consistent. Ideas were

also provided on how private agencies could coordinate and streamline orientations by holding orientations as job fairs or during family days.

Some suggested that more be done to advertise orientations and make them more accessible for participants. This included advertising dates of orientations in churches, on community calendars or a web-based calendar and providing them in different locations.

Content

That same theme of consistency was expressed through ideas on the orientation content. Ideas included having a standardized presentation and timeline across agencies or as stated above, provide an online orientation that can provide that consistency.

Another theme that foster parents felt was important in the orientation content was honest information, that is, information to help prospective parents set realistic expectations. This they felt could be done by providing statistics on children in care, describing what many of the children have been through and the challenges they create for parents. It was suggested that prospective families be advised that their parenting approaches may need to be adjusted and describe the types of supports they will need in order to help these kids reach positive outcomes.

Other orientation content suggestions included having an active foster parent at the orientation to answer questions, handouts that clearly explain the steps to becoming a foster parent, and next steps following the orientation.

Since being a foster parent is not for everyone, both focus groups felt it important during the orientation to provide alternative ways for individuals to serve children and families in the foster care system. This would be supported with handouts or brochures on various options.

Website

Both focus groups felt that moving the orientation to a web-based platform would provide consistency. By doing so they saw it as more than a one-time event, but rather something they could go back to and find information on things they may not have fully comprehended the first time. They suggested that a web-based orientation could include subject matter tabs, videos and other materials for them to review.

Agency Selection

In Arizona once a family decides they want to be a resource family, they generally attend an orientation and discover the next step in the process is choosing from a number of contracted agencies in order to begin the homestudy and licensing process. Supporting prospective parents in agency selection was deemed as a priority by the focus groups.

Since selecting an agency takes place following an orientation, some of the suggestions were to provide participants with a handout of agencies and specific information on each or to have a representative from each agency at the orientation and give participants time to talk to each. Another idea was to have a DCS recruitment representative in the orientation to provide information on the various agencies and answer questions.

Website

Other suggestions involved providing agency information on the website in differing formats. One idea was to have an online questionnaire or decision tree that could guide families to an agency that best meets their needs. It was suggested that the website provide a list of agencies, their individual services, expectations above licensing requirements, and a link to the agency's website. Both focus groups felt it would be helpful to have online reviews and ratings for each of the agencies.

The Licensing Process

Another priority area suggested by participants would be to provide more information and clarity to prospective foster parents on the process for becoming a licensed foster parent. All three focus groups provided feedback on the licensing process.

Several noteworthy ideas were presented on how to clarify steps to the licensing process. Some suggested a checklist or timeline with "helpful hints" for each step. This would include a realistic or average time commitment. In reference to that idea, a suggestion was made to make the process faster. Moreover, they recognized that the process was inconsistent between licensing agencies and clarity of what the agencies required in relation to DCS requirements. Other suggestions included increasing the availability of more foster parent training classes.

Website

Some suggested that parts if not all of the foster parent training could be presented over the web. Others valued the classroom experience and meeting other families. Having training materials onsite for later reference was seen as a value. Licensing steps and helpful hints mentioned above could also be web-based.

Ongoing Support

Since foster family retention is a growing issue at DCS, ongoing support was purposely addressed in all three focus groups. This led to fourteen priority areas, some of which are similar. For purposes of this report they have been grouped into four topical areas.

Services for Children in Their Care

Foster parents are focused on the needs of the children they serve. Getting services for their children is one way to support the foster family. Better access to behavioral health services was a priority determined by the groups. In addressing the priority, they expressed the need for more services, lower waiting times, easier referrals, and more appropriate placements for kids with therapeutic needs.

Suggested solutions included having access to a behavioral health advocate (independent of the system) who can support the foster family's needs. Allow foster parents to help in obtaining appropriate services and to make needed connections between doctors to get children enrolled in services. Since each child brings different challenges, a suggestion was made to have a Facebook page for foster parents to share ideas for meeting these challenges.

In times of crisis they suggested that supports be in place where prescriptions can be obtained on a 24-hour basis and that the child's treatment team be more responsive during the crisis.

Child Placements and Information

Support around child placement was prioritized by all three groups with focus on making the right placement, providing the foster parents with information on the children being placed and being consistent in the information provided.

Foster parents expressed that DCS needs to be more focused on the right placement fit, rather than just finding a bed. Participants expressed the desire for the agency to eventually move away from being reactive and in crisis mode to making proactive plans and ensuring best placement fit for both the child and foster family. They recognized that in order to make good placements, workers would need to have a good assessment of the child prior to placement and a good record of the skills/specialties/experiences of foster parents. They suggested that DCS work closely with licensing agencies to make sure placement decisions are best practice.

In reference to new foster parents, they recommended not placing a high needs child with a new foster parent, not asking a new foster parent to take more kids until they feel confident with their job, respecting the boundaries of foster parents and not guiltting them into taking kids they are not comfortable caring for in their home. They further suggest that DCS use specialty foster parents for children with special needs (medical, educational, language, etc.) and provide appropriate supports and resources to meet the special needs of the child.

The provision of information to the foster parent at the time of placement was seen as a critical support by focus group participants. Transparency was seen as key with full disclosure from workers providing all the information about the child at time of placement. To help in this effort the group suggested standardization of information workers should share with foster parents when placing a child. Foster parents should receive placement packets. To better understand both the worker's responsibilities and the foster parents' it was suggested that DCS meet regularly with foster parents at the local level to discuss what is needed at placement.

A couple pieces of information participants felt they needed at time of placement was information on court cases and the role of the worker making the placement. They also felt it important to have information on siblings in other placements so that they could maintain connections and the sibling birth order.

Beyond information provided at placement, the foster parents asked that more information be shared with them about the case as it affects the child (case plan, CFT notes, etc.). It was expressed by one parent as "give us access to everything the foster parents have rights to or that is needed to work with the child."

Foster Parents as Team Members

Foster parents expressed the need to be supported as a valuable member of the team with an equal voice in addressing the needs of children. Some suggestions to improve in this area were to have members of the team ask for input from the foster parents and view their perspective as valuable to the case, give foster parents a voice in court (the voice that represents the child's current state) and have a team member serve as a foster parent advocate.

They also suggested everyone in the case be cross trained on the foster parent training and the responsibilities and experiences of foster parents. Further, train staff on how to communicate professionally and respectfully with foster parents, advocate for foster parents and support their role.

Focus group participants felt improvements needed to be made in the consistency of communicating and implementing policies that affect foster parents and the children they serve. It was expressed as “breaking down the silos in the agency so that communication is better.” Suggestions included training for foster parents on policy, alerting foster parents via email when there are changes to policy and having supervisors touch base with foster parents periodically to ensure policy is being followed.

Though foster parents recognize they are not customers, good customer service techniques were suggested as ways to support foster parents. Some included providing DCS staff with training on basic customer service and basic phone etiquette/skills such as answering calls and e-mails, if voicemail is full, clear it in a timely manner and sharing information on voice mail messages of when would be the best time to call. Other suggestions included meeting quarterly with foster parents to problem solve, cross training foster parents on the role of a caseworker and allowing foster parents to volunteer to do some of the work of the case worker.

One group used the terms “Respect” and “Foster Parents Matter” to express the type of support they needed. The group further suggested ways they could be respected, such as saying thank you, listening to them, and expressing the understanding that the foster parent knows the child and their needs and are advocates for having the child’s needs met.

As team members, foster parents recognized in the focus group the need for the agency to retain caseworkers in order to have consistent worker relationships for the children and for them to form better partnership with workers.

Specific Foster Parent Supports

Participants provided ideas for supports specific to foster parents. They included:

- Foster parent support groups, some general and some specific based on the children in placement.
- Events in which the foster parents meet, network, ask questions, and share information.
- Access to trainings from other agencies and continued education specific to the age group of children.
- Need for grief/loss support for the entire foster family.
- A twenty-four-hour hotline for foster parents to address a number of areas including crisis, advocacy and getting case information.
- An increase in reimbursement rates to better meet the child’s needs.

One significant priority for support was legal representation for foster parents. They expressed the need for access to a legal advocate independent from the system and provided to foster parents during investigations. The legal representative/advocate would also go with foster parents when they are called to testify in court. Another idea was to have a twenty-four-hour legal hotline for foster parents with an independent lawyer giving legal information on such areas as processes/rights and actions

available when parent's rights are severed. Use and advertisement of the foster care review board was also suggested.

Website

In the area of ongoing supports a number of ideas relating to the DCS website were brought forward.

Several solutions to consistency of information on children were proposed. One was to have a database of information on case/child with updates, a calendar of court dates and a timeline of the child's events. This could be a foster parent dashboard to keep the foster parent updated on key information and provide digital copies of paperwork.

The website was also seen as a way to provide an indexable section to look up policy questions, legal rights of foster parents and possible resources of support. In the same manner, the website could provide information on steps of the process for foster care, adoption, foster to adopt, CASA, respite, therapeutic etc.

Summary

Focus group participants provided DCS with some valuable information on how to move forward with plans to better recruit, develop and support resource families. Some ideas were already in place prior to the focus group sessions and thus provided reassurance that the team is heading in the right direction. Other ideas help to focus on new areas needing change.

It should be noted that many ideas were expressed by focus group participants and DCS will not be able to implement them all. It should also be noted that not all foster parents would agree with some of the ideas presented. Priorities will need to be set and other foster parents will need to be involved in helping the agency set priorities and move forward with improvements.

Top 5 by Group and Subject

	Tucson	Phoenix 1	Phoenix 2
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More of it/More access to it • Clarify the steps of licensing and criteria for picking an agency • Hold more classes/cancel less classes • Have the licensing process take less time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More visibility of message • Make it easier to choose agency • Clarify the Steps of Licensing and Criteria of Picking and Agency • Redesign website 	
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve consistency of the orientation information and presentation • Advertise the orientations more/make them more accessible • When implementing orientation, have agencies streamline/coordinate better • Provide information about other options to support foster care/other licenses • Provide honest information – set realistic expectations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve structure of orientation • Improve orientation content • More training options and faster to get through • Provide Information on agencies
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better/More behavioral health supports and services • Supports that are specific to foster parents • Foster parent needs to be treated as a valued part of the team with an equal voice Legal representation for foster parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Consistency of Communicating and Implementing Policy • Be Focused on the Right Placement Fit (Rather than just finding a bed) • Increased Availability for Supports • Improve Customer Service • Foster Parents Be Trained on Their Rights and Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quicker services for children • Full disclosure from workers • Consistency in information provided on child • Timely services – behavioral health • Respect – foster parents matter

Full Data by Group and Subject

	Tucson	Phoenix 1	Phoenix 2
Recruitment	<p>More of it/ More access to it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attention on the recruitment section of the website • Design a website with tabs answering questions • Billboards • Facebook and social media advertisements • Dedicated recruitment webmaster to update website, social media, etc. • Have a central message/ slogan shared by all the agencies (branding) • Have the message be from the perspective of the foster parents (i.e. “Make a difference”) • Use more foster parent stories and foster parent interaction to recruit • Follow up when a foster parent recommends someone (with both parties) • Give access to recruitment information/ websites/ links so foster parent can educate/ recruit others • An even where all the agencies attend and foster parents can bring a recommended person • Tables at fairs (Pima County Faire, University Book Fair) • Posters in stores pointing to the website 	<p>More Visibility of Message</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute consistent messages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Messages that not only pull at the heart strings but also includes facts and actionable suggestions of all the ways the public can get involved ○ Consistency of what stats, facts and information is distributed ○ Show consistent appreciation for foster parents in recruitment (thank them) • Create website dedicated to recruitment and put everything you need to research on it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create an app. ○ Hire a webmaster dedicated to recruitment • Get information out into the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have schools recommend families for recruitment ○ Use social media- especially FB and Reddit ○ Television ads- advertise website ○ Billboards- advertise website ○ Churches ○ Charitable organizations ○ YMCA ○ Soccer ○ Boys and Girls clubs ○ Charitable organizations ○ Booths at big events ○ Speaking engagements • Involve foster parents in the process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ask foster parents to speak in the community and doing QAs ○ Let foster parents review recruitment materials and give input prior to 	

	Tucson	Phoenix 1	Phoenix 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise the website more clearly in each recruitment material <p>Clarify the Steps of Licensing and Criteria of Picking and Agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put a list of the agencies and a description of what they specialize in on the website (why are they different from each other)? • Let foster parents rate/ review agencies (i.e. like Yelp) • Put a pdf checklist of all the steps of licensing on the website • Include all the steps one must do to prepare for a home inspection • Include the (realistic) average timeline for each step of licensing and the home inspection • More accessible (web) information on when the next class will start and the class schedules. <p>Hold More Classes/ Cancel Less Classes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't cancel classes with less than 5 people in them • Offer online classes (but give access to a person to ask questions afterwards) • Rotate agencies offering training <p>Have the Licensing Process Take Less</p>	<p>distribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DCS be a positive presence in foster parent FB groups- to understand barriers to recruitment ○ Distribute recruitment tools to foster parents and let them recruit more <p>Make it Easier to Choose Agencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute a comprehensive questionnaire to all agencies to provide key criteria • Ask foster parents to write 30 questions on what they would have wanted to know about agencies when deciding, and include these questions on questionnaire • Publish answers to questions on decision tree for choosing agencies • Create a comprehensive bio on each agency • Include information on what types of families they work well with • Include what supports they offer FP • Include what age groups/ kids needs they specialize in • Do they have childcare for PS MAPP? <p>Clarify the Steps of Licensing and Criteria of Picking and Agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put all information on the website- steps of the process for foster care, adoption, foster to adopt, CASA, respite, therapeutic etc. • Specify what are the DCS vs. Agency requirements • Show the average time each step of the process takes for each agency • List "helpful hints" for each step • Require consistency of the agency requirements • Include how foster parent demographics 	

	Tucson	Phoenix 1	Phoenix 2
	<p>Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start home studies before/ during PS MAPP • Address the OLRC inspection backup before having more people add to the queue • Advertise the realistic timeline of the process- set accurate expectations • Do the training online (with access to an instructor for QA) 	<p>(being single, lgbt, age) effects steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specify what is legally required and what is recommended • State when each agency starts the licensing process (during, before or after MAPP) <p>Redesign the Website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a dedicated website for recruitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bring together a committee of foster parents to help design it (from the perspective of FP) ○ Have a contest for the best design! ○ Include a page listing all types of supports offered by different agencies and the process to get supports ○ Include a page that debunks myths ○ Include information on all opportunities (all licenses, adoption, CASA, respite, etc.). ○ Information on the needs of kids in care and the skillsets needed to care for special needs ○ Videos of foster parents telling their stories ○ Use consistent branding, logo, graphics, etc. • Section for choosing agency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create a decision tree where you pick your county and then have checkboxes/ choose criteria that narrows down list of agencies ○ Include a comprehensive description of each agency ○ Have foster parents help come up with 10 recommended questions to 	

	Tucson	Phoenix 1	Phoenix 2
		ask agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include a calendar which shows the training availability of each agency ○ Include information on scheduling- the more flexible schedule the better ○ Give all the ways to call the agency, including cell phone access 	
Orientation	Improve consistency of the orientation information and presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make it Web-based ● Outline suggested MTG guideline ● Clearly outline what agencies provide what services ● Improve communication (present from the foster parents point of view) ● Have a consist presentation and timeline across agencies ● Take agencies out of orientation - one group ● Have website tabs with topics ● Include videos on orientation website ● Use questionnaire/ decision tree on website to guide parents to best agency ● Require representatives from all agencies at orientation to answer questions Advertise the orientations more/ make them more accessible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advertise the orientations more in churches and with other community partners ● Increase PSA's (radio) Social media ● Make them required 		Orientation - Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explore agencies and what they offer ● Needs to be attractive ● Organized/consistency ● DCS provided not agencies ● Option for online ● Positive/include options for serving in other ways ● Breakout groups/ kinship or separate Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● List of agencies ● Where you need to go next ● Follow-up process that is clear ● Successful foster parent there ● Bullet points of what has to be done to get licensed – what is expected Training – More options/faster <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not agency specific ● Update/revise information in training ● Watch videos that help ● Some online ● Like people in groups/training ● Training – continue with support group after training with like folks ● Quick connect is difficult ● Trainers know their materials Information on agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● List of agencies and expectation above

	Tucson	Phoenix 1	Phoenix 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide a central, web based orientation for consistency ● Put schedule and calendar on web ● Offer them in different locations in city – i.e. south side of Tucson <p>When implementing orientation, have agencies streamline/coordinate better</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hold orientation at agency Job fair ● Support groups (FPO acc agencies) ● Family Day (meet FP/from all agencies) ● Demonstrate a united front (Pic United) ● One message <p>Provide information about other options to support foster care/ other licenses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review board ● Respite ● Child care ● Level of of FP ● Volunteers ● Pamphlets ● Other ways to help kids <p>Provide honest information- set realistic expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percent of kids - disorders, behaviors, abuse, neglect ● Examples of kids - challenges as a foster parent ● Adjusting parenting approaches 		<p>licensing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Online questionnaire to guide to agency ● Handout information on agencies at orientation ● Have person to factually speak on it in training or be able to call a person ● List of agency services ● DCS recruiter to ask questions ● Online links to agency website ● Review and rate different agencies

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports for help dealing with kids • Types of children and family age dynamics - what child best fits • Positive outcomes for kids 		
Support	<p>Better/ More Behavioral Health Supports and Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 hour access to obtain prescriptions • CPSA back • Easier referrals • Money for services • Lower waiting times for services • Access to a behavioral health advocate who can support needs of FP (Advocate is independent from system) • More appropriate placements for therapeutic needs. <p>Supports that are Specific to Foster Parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support groups • Groups that specialize on caring for ranges of ages of children • Events in which the foster parents meet, network, ask questions, share information • Access to trainings from other agencies • Grief /loss support group for entire foster family • Tax information • Continued education specific 	<p>Improve Consistency of Communicating and Implementing Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer policy training to FP • Break down the silos in the agency so that communication is better • Provide an indexable section of the website to look up questions about policy • Advertise to FP when there are changes in policy (any changes) • Improve communication about health insurance policy • Have supervisor touch base with FP periodically to ensure policy is being followed/ get input <p>Be Focused on the Right Placement Fit (Rather than just finding a bed)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get out of reactive/ crisis mode and make a proactive plan for ensuring best placement fit • Have a good assessment of the child prior to placement • Have a good record of the skills/ specialties/ experiences of foster parents • Don't place a high needs child with a new foster parent • Don't ask a new foster parent to take more kids until they feel confident with their job • Give all the information about the child at the time of placement 	<p>Quicker Services for Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections between doctors to get children in • FB foster parents <p>DCS Worker full Disclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement packets – done • Guidance for worker son what to share • Meet with FP/DCS on what to share • Standardize what they should share in paperwork • Provide information on court cases • Information to worker quicker • Standards for contact from child's worker • Information on siblings in other placements • One case manager for child • Retention of caseworkers <p>Consistency of Child Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of information on case/child updated • Dashboard for FP with key information • Digital copies of what is on paper • Calendar of court dates • Timeline – children events <p>Timely Services/Behavior Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in laws – Jacobs law • Allow FP to help look for and obtain services • Better team response to crisis • Not enough services available so need more • Contract with more quality behavioral health services

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	<p>to age group of children</p> <p>Foster Parent Needs to Be Treated As a Valued Part of the Team with an Equal Voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a foster parent advocate. • Members of the team ask for input from the foster parent and value their perspective as valuable to the case. • Everyone in the case be cross trained on MAPP and the responsibilities and experiences of foster parents. • Share more information about the child (background, current health, behaviors) • Share more information about the case as it effects child (case plan, CFT notes, etc.) • Train case team to advocate for foster parents and support their role • Staff training of how to communicate professionally and respectfully with foster parents • Having a voice in court- the voice that represents the child's current state • Given access to everything the foster parents have rights to or that is needed to work with the child <p>Legal Representation for Foster Parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a legal advocate who 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be transparent about child with history of perp., and place that child in most appropriate setting • Provide appropriate supports and resources to meet the needs of the child • Use specialty FP for their specialty (medical, educational, language, etc.) • Don't retrain a professional on their profession (ask a doctor to go through medical training) • DCS work more closely with agencies to make sure their placement decisions are best practice • Respect the boundaries of foster parents. Do not guilt them into taking kids they are not comfortable caring for in their home • Give information about all siblings of the child- to maintain connections. Give birth order. <p>Increased Availability for Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster parent advocate with a 24 hour hotline • 24 hour help line where you can access case information about the child/ case (basic information is the priority here) • Have warm line answer phone- often goes to voicemail. <p>Improve Customer Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better information sharing between case worker and FP • Meet quarterly with foster parents to problem solve • Allow foster parents to volunteer to do some of the work of case workers • Foster parents attend MMIC to be part of solutions • Have a foster parent advocate (phone 	<p>Respect – Foster Parents Matter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One number for FP to call – call center • Saying thank you • Listening • Weekly/monthly forum on website to help foster parents meet together to support each other • Listening to FP • Understanding the FP knows the child better • Return FP and child calls • Consistency in caseworkers • More money for placements • Knowing which worker they are talking to at placement – investigation worker or placement worker • Value FP opinion • Recognize FP as advocate for child • Forum for FP to be advocates • Better partnership with worker • Training for workers on supporting FP

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	<p>is independent from the system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided for investigations • Provided for allegations • Legal information when parents rights are severed • 24 hour legal hotline- independent lawyer giving legal information • Have legal representative/ advocate go with you when called to court • Training on legal processes/ rights • Advertise foster care review board to foster parents and encourage them to go. 	<p>24/7)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the attitude about foster parents- value their input more • Be able to access information about case rather than wait for case worker to give it • Cross train foster parents on role of a case worker (ongoing training option) • Require case workers to do PS MAPP training • Provide DCS with basic customer service training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Basic phone etiquette/ skills ○ Answering calls and e-mails ○ If you have a full voicemail, clear it timely ○ Share information on voice mail message of when the best time to call/ contact is <p>Foster Parents Be Trained on Their Rights and Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information on website about their rights • More information in PS MAPP • List of all resources on the website and what you need to access each (and average time to do so) • Be able to mentor with an experienced foster parent • Streamline expectations • Consistently train all staff on the rights of foster parents • Provide a packet with all the information on the child 	