Exploration of the Role of a Foster Parent

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Solutions & Applications

- Foster Parents
  - Provide more services to foster parents: medical, day care, tutors, CASA workers, etc.
  - Give foster parents more information about children coming into their home
  - Provide parents with community support
  - Make sure parents understand their role

- Social Workers
  - More experienced foster care workers
  - Increased communication between social workers & other roles
  - Knowledge of resources and programs to give to parents
  - Do not make foster care for social workers an entry position
  - Decrease social worker case loads

- Foster Children
  - Children require more unconditional positive regard
  - Increased consistency between authoritative figures

Abstract

One of the most damaged areas in American society today is the foster care system. There are many factors that contribute to the issues within the system, & change seems to occur very slowly for those who suffer the most. One of the key roles meant to uplift those in the foster care system is the role of the foster parent who is assigned to both provide care for the children placed in their home. However, these responsibilities often prove much harder than many foster parents expect. As a result, some foster children fall even further behind. In order to understand the difficulties foster parents face within the foster care system, one must first know how the temporary parent role fits into the overall foster care structure. At that point, their responsibilities can be better understood & the challenges within their roles may be more effectively addressed.

Purpose: The goal of this poster is to show how the foster care system operates from the foster parent’s point of view.

Method

- Sources of Information
  - Government & foster care websites
  - Peer read databases
  - Workshops required to be a foster parent provided by Bethany Christian Services
  - Personal interviews with former foster parents & former foster children

Research Questions

- Who is directly involved in the foster care system?
- How do those roles work together?
- What struggles do the roles have working together?
- Why is there a high rate of foster parent dropout?
- Why are foster children failing when leaving the system?
- What are some potential solutions to these problems?

I. Profile of a Foster Child

- Psychological
  - Lack of trust in authority figures
  - Low self-esteem
  - High rates of mental illness
- Physical
  - Lack of access to healthcare
  - Lice/bedbugs are common
- Cognitive
  - Low school performance
  - Low attention rates
- Behavioral
  - High Rates of Bed Wetting in Older Ages
  - High Aggression
  - High Rates of Substance Abuse

II. Systems Approach

- Social workers ➔ Advocate between birth/foster parents
- Court/judges ➔ Determine guardianship/acceptance of foster kids.
- Foster parent ➔ Meet needs of foster children in accordance with policies made by other sources.
- Foster Parents
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Findings

- Why is There a High Rate of Foster Parent Dropout?
  - High number of responsibilities for parents
  - Inability for caseworkers to inform parents of child’s needs
  - Birth parents & foster children complain about foster parents
  - Difficulty for foster parents to take care of foster child’s daily needs
  - Parents must contact their own resources to help children
- What Struggles do the Roles Have Working Together?
  - Various reasons disagree about what is best for the child
  - Inexperienced caseworkers
  - Money is currently the fundamental driver of the system
  - Consistently unmet expectations from birth parents
- Why are Foster Children Failing when Leaving the System?
  - Lack of consistency in foster child’s life
  - Many foster children learn not to trust authority
  - Lack of love in foster children’s lives
  - Adults focus on lower levels of Maslow’s Hierarchy

Acknowledgments

- My Faith Foster Family Care, Bethany Christian Services, Rick Rack, Royal Family Kids Camp, Hope College Psychology Department
- Interviews
  - Project Coach for the Center of Faithful Leadership at Hope College
  - Maria Salgado: former foster care child
  - Barton & Karen Francour: Directors of Royal Family Kids Camp in Illinois; former foster parents

References

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Trends in Foster Care and Adoption: FFY 2002-FFY 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% of Children</th>
<th>Reason for Home Displacement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
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<td>Physical Abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
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<td>Psychological Maltreatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>Other</td>
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Reasons For Child Displacement In The US (2013)