

Satisfaction with Resource Parenting, Services, and Supports and Interest in Continuing

Study Overview

- A survey of resource parents was conducted to assess satisfaction with resource parenting experiences, as well as with services and supports available to resource parents as part of DCYF's ***A Family for Every Child!*** initiative. A total of 224 licensed resource parents completed survey items related to the present brief.

Key Findings

- Resource parents reported high rates of satisfaction with the resource parenting role, relationships they have formed with youth, and with system supports and responsiveness to resource parent and child needs.
- Areas rated less favorably: the amount of information given by caseworkers about children being placed, availability of social workers when needed, timeliness of receiving return calls or requested services, limited opportunities to meet other resource parents, and ways in which resource placements have ended.
- Nearly three-quarters of resource parents accessed at least one type of service or support in the past year; the most common was individual counseling for a child in the home. Satisfaction with services was generally positive.
- Resource parents were unaware of a number of available resources and supports. The majority were not aware of available supports through community-based agencies such as therapeutic recreation activities, youth enrichment funds, or life skills programming for teens. More were aware of services for foster parents or children in their care such as respite care services, WIC, travel reimbursements, and free or reduced lunch program – though rates of awareness were still relatively low.
- About 25% of resource parents indicated uncertainty or unlikelihood of continuing to provide resource care 12 months from the survey date.
- Top factors related to possible discontinuation included poor communication with caseworker, not having a say in children's future, difficulty seeing a child leave, and lack of support from the child welfare agency. Satisfaction with supports and with role relationships, higher family income, and having one or more foster/adoptive children in the home were associated with lower likelihood of discontinuing to provide resource care.

Key Recommendations

- Satisfaction with supports and responsiveness may be addressed through attending to social worker and system responsiveness, such as more timely response to service requests and phone calls from resource parents. In addition, improved communication and responsiveness may impact the likelihood of a resource parent continuing to provide care.
- More effort is needed to increase awareness of the availability of community-based services and supports available for foster children and for resource parents.
- Barriers to accessing services may be addressed by offering services at a variety of times and locations amenable to the schedule demands of resource parents.

Satisfaction with the experience of providing foster or adoptive care (i.e., resource parenting) is an important predictor of individual commitment to continue providing such care. Research demonstrates that satisfaction with services and supports – including social support, mentorship, ongoing parent training, and financial or logistical supports (e.g. childcare, healthcare, transportation) – are linked with both commitment to continue and actual continued fostering.¹⁻³ Resource parent characteristics also are related to retention, with income accounting for observed differences in retention among minority or single-parent households.⁴ Assessing resource parent's overall satisfaction and experiences with supports and services is a critical step in identifying points of intervention to increase satisfaction and ensure resource parents are connected to an array of needed supports and services to increase commitment to continuing as a resource parent.

This report summarizes findings from a Rhode Island-based resource parent survey to assess their satisfaction with being a resource parent and with services and supports available to resource parents within the state, as well as the likelihood of continuing to provide placement opportunities as a resource parent. The survey was conducted on behalf of the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) as part of an initiative funded by the Administration of Children and Families. A previous report based on this survey summarized resource parent experiences with the application and licensing process. Surveys were distributed electronically to 670 households, which had an active or pending license to provide foster or adoptive care and an active email address in DCYF databases. This was supplemented with an additional 136 households whose members had attended in the previous

year a resource parenting information session held by Adoption Rhode Island. A total of 270 households (33.5%) completed at least a portion of the online survey. Participants included those who were licensed or seeking a license through DCYF or one of 11 private child-placing agencies (PCAs) (85% of participating resource parents were affiliated with DCYF). For purposes of this brief, the sample was limited to those respondents who were licensed as resource parents. Respondents who had sufficiently completed relevant portions of the survey were included in analyses, resulting in a final sample of 224 participants for the present report.

Respondents ranged in age from 23 to 76 years old (mean age: 46 years). Approximately 90% were women, 9% were male and 1% identified as transgender. Resource parents identified primarily as Caucasian (84%); an additional 7% identified as Hispanic, and 2% or fewer identified as being African American, Native American, Asian, bi- or multi-racial, or from other racial/ethnic backgrounds. Resource parents indicated the types of placements they provided, selecting all types of placements that applied to them. Participants indicated providing the following types of care: kinship care (34%), non-relative foster care (40%), treatment or private agency foster care (12%), pre-adoptive care (25%), adoptive care (18%), guardianship (8%), and not currently providing care (12%).

Satisfaction with Resource Parenting

Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with resource parenting using a 19-item measure adapted from the Satisfaction with Foster Parenting Inventory⁵ and other sources⁶. Factor analysis of these items revealed two domains: (1) satisfaction with system supports and responsiveness, and (2) satisfaction with role relationships. The first domain addresses resource parent satisfaction with caseworker supports and with the availability of other system-level supports (e.g., additional training or services). The second domain addresses resource parent satisfaction with personal relationships (e.g., between family and foster/adoptive child, with child’s biological family, with other resource families) and with overall role satisfaction. Chronbach’s alpha, a measure of internal consistency of items within a scale, was good-to-excellent for both domains (0.95 and 0.76, respectively). Statistical analyses revealed that resource parents rated their satisfaction higher on role relationships (Mean = 3.9 out of 5) than supports and responsiveness (Mean 3.3 out of 5; $t = -9.96, p < .001$). Item-level responses are summarized in Table 1, below.

A majority (81%) of resource parents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their role providing resource care to children, and 95% reported satisfaction in their relationships with foster or adoptive children and their roles helping children. Other items rated as satisfying or very satisfying were resource parents’ working relationship with other authorities related to the foster or adoptive child (e.g., school counselors; 77%) and the ability to balance resource care with their family schedule (74%).

Although overall ratings of satisfaction were positive, the results do highlight areas for improvement. Four items related to *supports and responsiveness* were negatively rated by about one-third of respondents: the amount of information given by caseworkers about children being placed, availability of social workers when needed, the time between asking for and receiving a service, and the time for caseworkers to return calls. In addition, between 20 and 27% of resource parents expressed some level of dissatisfaction with other items related to supports and responsiveness (e.g., understanding of the legal system, assistance from social workers).

Table 1. Satisfaction with Resource Parenting

	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)
Your working relationship with social service agencies (social workers, DCYF, etc.) ^a	24.8	30.1	28.6	12.1	4.4
The amount of information given by your caseworker about the children placed in your home ^a	21.5	22.5	21.5	23.6	11.0
The availability of social workers when needed ^a	16.0	26.3	23.7	20.6	13.4
Availability of additional resource parent training ^a	17.9	31.0	29.9	15.8	5.4
Assistance from social workers ^a	18.0	27.3	29.9	17.5	7.2
Your understanding of the legal system ^a	18.6	29.6	25.1	15.6	11.1
The amount of time spent discussing your foster/adoptive children with your caseworker ^a	24.4	29.9	21.8	15.2	8.6
Value caseworker places on your opinion regarding your foster/adoptive children ^a	27.0	30.2	21.2	13.2	8.5
Crisis response of your caseworker(s) ^a	19.9	29.5	27.6	13.5	9.6
Length of time for caseworker to return phone calls ^a	17.9	31.3	20.0	20.0	10.8
Time between asking for a service and receiving it ^a	14.7	28.9	23.2	20.5	12.6

	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)
Your working relationship with other authorities related to the foster/adoptive child (schools, counselors, etc.)	32.0	46.6	15.7	3.9	1.7
Your relationship with your foster/adoptive children ^b	72.4	24.0	2.6	0.5	0.5
Balancing resource care with your family's schedule ^b	32.6	41.1	17.4	6.8	2.1
Your relationship with the biological family of your foster/adoptive child ^b	16.0	27.8	34.9	15.4	5.9
The ways in which your resource placements have ended ^b	21.5	22.8	36.2	10.1	9.4
Opportunities to meet other resource families ^b	16.2	29.2	31.4	14.6	8.6
Your role in helping children ^b	57.1	36.6	4.2	0.5	1.6
Your overall level of satisfaction with providing resource parenting ^b	44.3	36.5	14.1	3.6	1.6

Note: Survey Domains – ^a Satisfaction with Supports and Responsiveness; ^b Satisfaction with Role Relationships

As indicated, ratings of *role relationship items* were more positive. Among the domains with some room for improvement, resource parents indicated some dissatisfaction with the limited opportunities to meet other resource parents, their relationships with foster and adoptive children’s biological family, and the ways in which resource placements have ended. Each of these items was rated as dissatisfying or very dissatisfying by approximately 20-25% of participants.

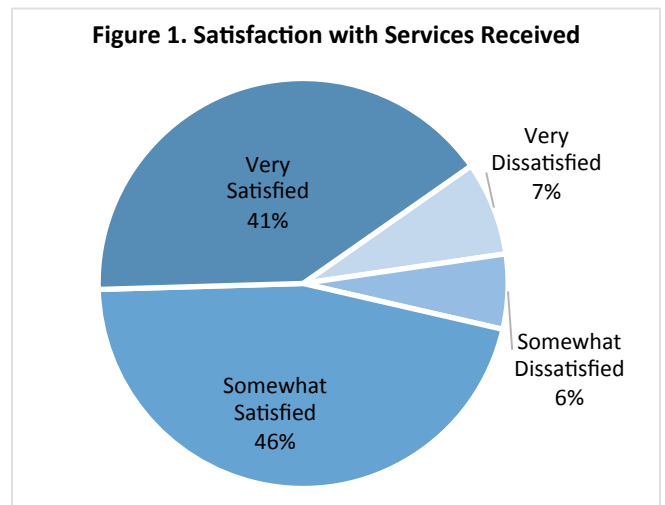
Follow-up analyses compared ratings of satisfaction by placement type (kinship vs. non-kinship, pre/adoptive vs. non pre/adoptive) and by licensing provider (DCYF/non-DCYF). Kinship providers reported significantly higher levels of supports and responsiveness satisfaction (Mean=3.64 out of 5; $t=-2.82$, $p < .01$) compared to non-kinship providers (Mean=3.23 out of 5). No differences were found between kinship and non-kinship providers on role relationship satisfaction, and no differences were found on either role relationship satisfaction or supports and responsiveness satisfaction between licensing provider-type (DCYF or private agency).

Past Year Service Use

Resource parents reported the types of services they had used in the past year and their satisfaction with these services (see Table 2 and Figure 1). Resource parents reported they had used an average of two different types of service in the past year. Approximately 27% indicated they had not used any services specified, while 20% reported they had used four or more different types of services. The most frequently accessed services were individual counseling for children (43%), recreational activities for foster and adoptive families (35%), and seeking professional advice regarding rights or services (27%). A majority of resource parents who accessed services reported they were either somewhat satisfied (46%) or very satisfied (41%) with services they had received. No significant differences in satisfaction with services received was observed based on provider type (adoptive vs. non-adoptive or kin vs. non-kin) or by licensing provider.

Table 2: Services Received

	Yes (%)
Individual counseling for children in household	43.1
Recreational activities for foster / adoptive families	34.6
Professional advice about rights or services	26.7
General support groups	19.3
Respite care	19.3
Individual counseling for adults in household	15.5
Residential treatment for foster / adoptive children	15.4
Family counseling	11.2
Psychiatric hospitalization for foster / adoptive children	10.1
Other	24.6



Barriers / Factors in Accessing Services and Supports

Resource parents were asked to rate the degree to which specific barriers affected their ability to access services and supports; responses are presented in Table 3. Excluding “no need for services,” a count variable was created by summing the number of barriers that resource parents agreed or strongly agreed limited access to service. The average number of barriers indicated was 1.1 barriers (s.d. = 1.8). Nearly 60% reported no agreement of experiencing any of the barriers indicated, while 25% agreed to experiencing one to two barriers, and 16% agreed to experiencing three or more of these barriers. The items reported as the greatest barriers to accessing services included: difficulty coordinating schedules of family members (22%), lack of childcare (15%) and services not available at convenient times of day (14%). In addition, 18.5% of resource parents reported no need of services for children in their care as a reason for lack of access.

Table 3: Barriers to Accessing Services & Supports

	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
No appropriate services available in my local area	21.1	33.0	35.7	8.1	2.2
Services cost too much money	23.9	30.4	36.4	7.6	1.6
Difficulty coordinating schedules of family members	16.8	28.6	33.0	18.4	3.2
Services available but foster/adoptive children do not qualify	18.9	29.7	39.5	9.2	2.7
Services not available at convenient times of day	16.2	30.8	38.9	12.4	1.6
Services not available on convenient days of the week	16.4	29.5	42.1	10.4	1.6
Services were ineffective for what we needed	16.7	27.4	44.1	7.0	4.8
Lack of transportation	20.9	31.9	37.9	6.0	3.3
Lack of childcare	18.5	31.5	34.8	10.3	4.9
No need for services for foster/adoptive children in my care	21.2	25.0	35.3	12.5	6.0

Satisfaction with Resources Available to Foster Children

Resource parents were asked to rate their satisfaction with an array of services and resources available (see Table 4). Resource parents reported the greatest satisfaction (i.e., satisfied/very satisfied) with medical coverage (87.6%) and dental coverage (77.9%) provided to children in their care. The greatest areas of dissatisfaction (i.e., dissatisfied/very dissatisfied) were in clothing allowance (23.7%) and foster board payments (19.8%). An additional two items, birthday and holiday checks were negatively rated by 13-14% of resource parents, though approximately 23 to 28% of resource parents were not aware of either service. Lack of awareness regarding available services was an issue for many of these services rated by resource parents. About 29% of resource parents were not familiar with respite care services, and over 20% were not familiar with WIC or travel reimbursements for foster parents; 15% were unaware of the free school lunch program for youth in foster care placement.

Table 4: Satisfaction with Resources Available to Foster Children

	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)	Did Not Know About Service (%)
Foster Board Payments	21.8	29.2	18.3	10.9	8.9	10.9
Clothing Allowance	18.3	33.7	17.8	17.3	6.4	6.4
Birthday Checks	14.3	30.5	18.2	7.9	5.9	23.2
Holiday Checks	11.9	28.4	17.4	9.0	5.5	27.9
Daycare (for foster children)	26.0	23.5	34.5	5.0	4.0	7.0
Medical Coverage through NHP ^a / Medicaid	49.5	38.1	7.4	2.0	1.0	2.0
Travel Reimbursements for Foster Parents	26.7	32.2	13.4	3.0	3.0	21.8
Dental Coverage	40.7	37.2	12.1	3.0	3.5	3.5
Free School Lunch	35.2	30.7	18.6	0.0	0.5	15.1
WIC	28.6	29.6	17.6	3.5	0.0	20.6
Respite Care	15.2	18.3	27.9	4.6	5.1	28.9

Note: ^a Neighborhood Health Plan

Resource parents also rated their satisfaction with an array of services and supports available through community-based agencies (see Table 5). The majority of resource parents reported they were unaware of most of the services included in the survey. Specifically, nearly two thirds of participants (64%) were not aware of therapeutic recreation services, 61% were not aware of youth enrichment fund availability, and 56% were not aware of either life skills programs for teens or of teen grant funding. Resource parents rated the following services most satisfactorily (i.e., satisfied/very satisfied): Foster Forward Foster Parent Help line (28%), foster parent mentoring (23%), and private agency on-call services (21%). Among those familiar with each of these particular services, approximately 40 to 43% rated their satisfaction level as satisfied or very satisfied, compared to only 30 to 35% of those familiar with youth enrichment funds, life skills programs, or therapeutic recreation – each of which received a relatively higher proportion of neutral ratings.

Table 5: Satisfaction with Resources Available through Community Agencies

	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very Dissatisfied (%)	Did Not Know About Service (%)
Foster Parent Mentor	12.1	11.1	29.6	3.0	2.0	42.2
Foster Forward Foster Parent Help Line	15.2	12.6	30.8	4.5	1.5	35.4
Private agency on-call line	11.6	9.0	27.6	2.0	0.5	49.2
Teen Grants	9.8	7.8	24.9	1.0	0.5	56.0
Youth Enrichment Funds	8.6	5.1	23.4	1.0	0.5	61.4
Life Skills Program for Teens	7.6	5.6	29.3	1.0	0.5	56.1
Therapeutic Recreation	8.6	2.5	23.2	1.5	0.0	64.1

Likelihood to Use Services if Provided

Resource parents were asked to rate the likelihood of accessing an array of services if provided (see Table 6). Overall, 70 to 80% of resource parents reported they would be likely or very likely to participate in opportunities to be more involved in case planning for children in their care, online family resource center to provide information and services, and recreational opportunities for foster families. Between 50 to 60% reported being likely to participate in additional training for foster/adoptive parents and youth peer support activities. Likelihood to participate in all other services were reported by between 30 to 40% of resource parents surveyed.

Table 6: Likelihood to Use Services if Provided

	Very Likely (%)	Likely (%)	Undecided (%)	Unlikely (%)	Very Unlikely (%)
Additional training for foster/adoptive caregivers	27.2	29.5	24.1	11.6	7.6
Emergency respite	19.8	19.8	27.9	18.5	14.0
Short-term in-home respite	18.4	17.5	28.3	21.5	14.3
Mobile Crisis Teams to provide rapid in-home support	16.0	14.2	33.3	17.4	19.2
Home-based case management	15.5	22.7	30.9	16.4	14.5
Counseling for other family members	16.0	24.2	25.1	21.0	13.7
Counseling/support for family members when a foster child leaves the family	21.7	27.1	20.8	17.2	13.1
Opportunities to be more involved in case planning for the child	49.6	29.0	10.7	5.8	4.9
Online Family Resource Center to provide access to information and services	37.7	34.5	16.8	6.4	4.5
Peer support groups for foster/adoptive caregivers	29.1	34.1	19.7	9.9	7.2
Recreational opportunities for foster families	32.4	38.3	17.6	6.3	5.4
Youth peer support activities	22.1	29.7	30.6	6.8	10.8
Reunions/gatherings of pre-service training alumni	19.8	23.0	29.7	13.1	14.4

Roughly a third of resource parents reported they would be unlikely to make use of emergency respite, short-term in-home respite, mobile crisis response service, home-based care management, counseling for other family members or counseling/support for other family members when a child leaves the family, and reunions/gatherings of pre-service training alums. Finally, 17 to 19% reported they would be unlikely to participate in resource parent peer support groups, youth peer support activities or additional trainings.

Likelihood to Continue as a Resource Parent

Resource parents were asked to rate their likelihood to continue providing resource parenting one year from now (see Figure 2). The majority (77%) reported being somewhat or very likely to continue. Nearly 15% were not sure about their likelihood to continue, and 8% were somewhat or very unlikely to continue.

Reasons Resource Parents Unsure or Unlikely to Continue

For resource parents who indicated they were not sure or unlikely to continue as a resource parent within the next year, the survey asked participants to rate reasons why they were thinking of discontinuing (see Table 7). The top reason cited was poor communication with caseworker (28% rated as a 4 or higher on 5-point scale). Other reasons cited by 19 to 23% of resource parents included not having a say in child's future, difficulty seeing a child leave, agency insensitivity to caregiver needs/lack of support from agency, problems with children's birth parents, and expecting to adopt a child.

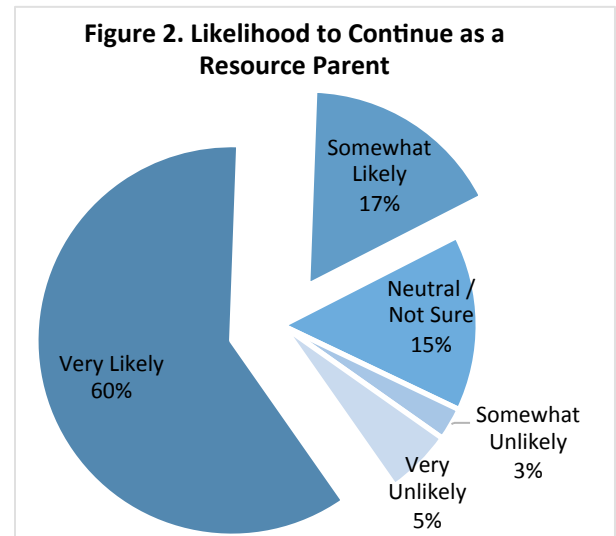


Table 7: Reasons Considering/Planning to Not Continue (N=47)

	Not at all a Reason				Very Much a Reason
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Age – will be too old to care for children	76.6	4.3	8.5	6.4	4.3
Divorce, marital problems	95.7	0.0	2.1	0.0	2.1
Health problems	78.7	8.5	6.4	2.1	4.3
Moved/relocated	84.8	0.0	4.3	2.2	8.7
Conflict between foster child and my own or adopted child	93.6	0.0	6.4	0.0	0.0
Expect to have my own child or more of my own children	91.5	2.1	2.1	0.0	4.3
Expect to adopt a child	70.2	4.3	2.1	6.4	17.0
May need to return to work or work full-time	68.1	10.6	8.5	2.1	10.6
Amount of monthly board payment	71.1	4.4	15.6	6.7	2.2
Cannot get the type of child requested	80.9	4.3	4.3	0.0	10.6
Poor communication with case worker	52.2	13.0	6.5	8.7	19.6
Agency is insensitive to my needs/lack of support from the agency	57.8	11.1	8.9	8.9	13.3
Do not have a say in child's future	53.2	6.4	17.0	12.8	10.6
Lack of respite services	73.9	10.9	4.3	6.5	4.3
Problems with children(s)' birth parent(s)	63.0	6.5	10.9	6.5	13.0
Child's behavior/discipline problems	67.4	10.9	13.0	4.3	4.3
Health or personal care needs of children will become too difficult to manage	80.4	6.5	6.5	4.3	2.2
Have difficulty seeing child leave	60.9	6.5	8.7	15.2	8.7

Two separate logistic regression models were used to identify predictors of discontinuing resource parenting in the next twelve months (defined as being unsure or unlikely to continue). The first model examined the effects of placement type (kin vs. non-kin; adoptive/pre-adoptive vs. non-adoptive; currently providing care vs. not providing care), licensing agency (DCYF vs. private agency), and the two satisfaction scales (Supports and Responsiveness; Role Relationships). Satisfaction with supports (OR=0.64, p<0.05) and satisfaction with role relationships (OR=0.51, p<0.05) were significantly and negatively associated with likelihood of discontinuing – as satisfaction scores increased, the likelihood of discontinuing to provide care in the next 12-months decreased. Type of placement and licensing agency were not related to interest in continuing as a resource parent. This finding is contrary to other research findings suggesting that kinship providers, in particular, are less likely to continue than other types of placement providers; further

investigation of this pattern is warranted, since administrative data suggest that kinship providers in Rhode Island may be less likely to renew licensure than non-kinship providers.

A second model was also tested that incorporated additional resource parent household and demographic characteristics. For this model, higher family income was significantly associated with a lower likelihood of discontinuing, (OR=0.85, $p<0.05$), as was having one (OR=0.23, $p=0.03$) or more (OR=0.14, $p<0.01$) foster or adoptive children currently living in the home, compared to having no foster or adoptive children currently in the home. Finally, satisfaction with role as a resource parent trended towards statistical significance, with parents reporting higher levels of satisfaction less likely to discontinue providing care (OR=0.55 $p<0.10$). Resource parent age, couple status, race, presence of biological children in the home, placement type, and satisfaction with supports and services were not significantly associated with likelihood to continue in this final model.

The series of findings from these regression models suggests that both satisfaction with role relationships and the availability and responsiveness of system supports are important factors that influence resource parent decisions to continue providing placements. Other family factors may also influence this decision-making process – particularly family income and whether the household is currently providing care. It may be that increased family income helps to offset concerns about system supports and responsiveness by providing access to other resources, though satisfaction with the resource parenting role and relationships continues to be an important factor. The final model also highlights the relationship of currently having a child in placement to decision-making about continuing as a resource parent. It may be that individuals who are not currently providing a placement are in the process of discontinuing care already.

Recommendations

The findings of this report suggest some areas the system may address to improve satisfaction with services and supports and with the overall resource parent role, which may have a positive effect on resource parent retention:

- Though satisfaction with supports and responsiveness was generally favorable, greater satisfaction may be achieved by attending to social worker and system responsiveness. This would include more timely response to service requests and phone calls from resource parents. Improved communication and responsiveness were also identified as factors associated with uncertainty about continuing as a resource parent, so these efforts may also improve resource parent retention.
- Given the importance of role relationship satisfaction to resource parent retention, efforts to address potential areas of dissatisfaction (e.g., limited opportunities to connect with other resource parents, dissatisfaction in relationships with biological parents of children in their care, and concerns about the way in which placements end) should be a particular focus.
- More effort is needed to increase awareness of the availability of community-based services and supports available for foster children and for resource parents. Greater awareness of resources may help to further enhance satisfaction with system supports and also provide necessary supports to maintain placements.
- In addition to boosting awareness, barriers to accessing services may be addressed by offering services at a variety of times and locations amenable to the schedule demands of resource parents.

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