



Barriers to achieving permanency for children in long-term adoption or guardianship placements in the District of Columbia

Study Report

**Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center
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Executive Summary

Background

The purpose of this study was to identify barriers to achieving permanency for children served by the District of Columbia child welfare system. The discussion about permanency in the District has been mostly based upon anecdotes and opinions; until this study there had been no actual study of the reasons why families hesitate to move forward with permanency.

This study, implemented by the Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center (FAPAC) with funding from Kidsave, sought to gather information beyond the anecdotal through systematic administration of a standardized tool to assess barriers. We hope that DC Child and Family Services Agency and child welfare stakeholders will utilize the identification of specific barriers to provide resources, develop policies and procedures, and initiate interventions to remediate these barriers to permanency for children in CFSA custody.

Methodology

The goal of this study was to determine why children in long-term placements who have a goal of adoption or guardianship are not moving forward to achieve permanency. Original eligibility criteria for inclusion in the study were: A child in CFSA's care who has the permanency goal of either adoption or guardianship for two or more years and has been in his/her current placement for two or more years. We defined the sample group in this way due to perceptions routinely provided by agencies that there are a significant number of children residing in long term placements with plans of adoption/guardianship whose families are not moving forward to permanency.

The study was approved by the CFSA Institutional Review Board (IRB) in July 2008. Using a structured interview instrument, we interviewed a sample of both foster and kinship parents caring for these children and a sample of the social workers assigned to work with these children to achieve their permanency goals. Caregivers who identified themselves at initial contact as strictly foster parents and not as resources for adoption or guardianship (not contingent upon any barriers being resolved) were eliminated from the study group. Both foster and kinship parents and social workers provided informed consent prior to participating in the interview.

Respondents were asked to identify services and processes that were barriers to completion of adoption or guardianship for the identified child, the type of barrier, and whether they were working to resolve the barrier. Respondents were then asked to indicate which barrier was the most important one to resolve.

Findings

Some of the most relevant findings were unintended and discovered when reviewing cases for our original sample as identified by the CFSA data management system. At that time, we determined that the number of children with a goal of adoption or guardianship who were in foster care placements of at least two years were in actuality fewer than anticipated based upon agency folklore and anecdote. The study criteria were revised to include children who have the permanency goal of either adoption or guardianship for two or more years and have been in his/her current placement for *one* or more years. This led us to question whether a significant systemic barrier to

permanency in these situations could be that children are moving too often to stabilize relationships that have the potential to move towards permanency.

Additionally, the study found that 14% of the children whose foster families were able to be contacted and screened for the study were in placements where the foster parents expressed that they were not planning to be a resource for adoption or guardianship (13 out of 94 contacted families). The fact that a large number of children with goals of adoption and guardianship for more than two years are in placements that do not consider themselves adoptive resources leads to another systemic concern about the placement matching process and the alignment of placements with permanency goals.

Findings from analysis of the barriers identified by interviewed foster and kinship parents and social workers include:

- Overall, foster/kinship parents were more likely than social workers to identify service needs as barriers to finalization. Social workers identified either none or a low rate of barriers in a number of service areas. Only one-half (50%) of foster/kinship parents indicated that they were working with their social workers to address these specific barriers. This leads researchers to question whether social workers are empowered to validate the barriers expressed by families and to work with families to identify ways to resolve those barriers.
- The barriers that families gave for not moving to permanency are felt to be barriers that should be able to be negotiated within a few weeks if there was a clear practice model that supported identifying and working to eliminate

barriers (i.e., day care, respite, school, tutoring, education, mentoring, subsidy, mental health, health care, college, after school care.) The prevalence of these issues as barriers leads to the question of how much effort is made to validate and to resolve barriers.

- An unexpected finding was the number of foster/kinship parents who referenced difficulties in their relationship with their child welfare agencies (both public and private) as a major barrier to permanency. Specifically, respondents' answers indicated a lack of support from and/or ineffective relationship with their social workers and agencies. Social worker turnover adversely affected the continuity of service planning and relationship building, compounded by what was expressed as poor communication between social workers and families.
- Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) was mentioned as a significant barrier by both foster parents and social workers, however more research would be needed to understand exactly in which ways TPR was considered to be an issue.
- Both foster parents and social workers made frequent mention of the child's concerns about adoption as a barrier to achieving permanency.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, we make the following recommendations for the District to improve efforts to achieve permanency for children:

1. Verify permanency goals and status for each child who has the goal of adoption or guardianship by meeting with the current foster family. Build the capacity

- of CFSA data management system to capture data related to potential permanency status of placements.
2. Train social workers to validate families' assessments of permanency barriers and to assist families in gaining access to services that can carry them post-adoption/guardianship. Get a written concurrence statement between the family and the worker about the barriers to permanence and an action plan for working through barriers. Elevate to upper level administration those situations where barriers appear too big to resolve on the social worker level, replacing current practice with an active agency approach and philosophy focused upon eliminating barriers.
 3. Provide training for workers and parents on how to address children's adoption-related concerns and fears.
 4. Increase the availability, accessibility and appropriateness of mental health and educational resources to meet current and future needs of children as they age.
 5. Implement effective and consistent efforts to decrease placement disruptions and to assist families and youth in building stable family units that support permanency.
 6. Develop future-oriented service plans jointly with foster/kinship parents and agencies and routinely jointly review them for progress in achievement. Establish administrative oversight to ensure that agency turnover of social workers does not continue to adversely affect the implementation of these service plans. Integrate discussion of subsidy needs into the service planning process.
 7. Significantly improve communication between foster/kinship parents and social workers and agencies.
 8. Increase the transparency and equitability of the adoption subsidy process and make it less adversarial and more supportive of families and children. Consider including more services in negotiated agreements. Amend subsidy policy and protocol to respond to systemic permanency barriers.
 9. Continue to consider the extension of adoption subsidy and guardianship to ages 18-21, especially for children achieving permanence at an older age.
 10. Consider changing legislation to allow legal guardianship by non-kin so that caregivers of older youth who won't consent to being adopted can opt for guardianship

Introduction

The large number of children in the District of Columbia's child welfare system with the permanency goal of adoption or guardianship who have been in long-term placements and have not been moving toward permanency is a concern of the District of Columbia's child welfare community. In its recent report, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, the Court Monitor of *LaShawn A v Fenty*, noted that the number of children in out-of-home care in long term placement remains high and the number of children exiting from foster care as a result of adoption or guardianship has been declining over the past four years.¹

While there have been many anecdotes offered by both social workers and foster and kinship parents for the reasons why many adoptions and guardianships are not progressing toward finalization and permanency, the Foster and Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center (FAPAC), with support from Kidsave, in the summer of 2008 initiated a study to systematically collect data from both foster and kinship parents and social workers to assess the perceived barriers to permanency for children with a goal of adoption or guardianship who have been in long-term placements. Findings from the study could be used by the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and stakeholders to address any identified barriers to permanency.

Methodology

The goal of this study was to determine why children in long-term placements who have a goal of adoption or guardianship are not moving forward to achieve permanency. The study sought to interview a random sample of foster and kinship parents and social workers for children meeting the study's eligibility criteria using a structured questionnaire. The planned sample size was 60 families and 60 social workers.

The original eligibility criteria for inclusion in the study were: A child in CFSA's care who has the permanency goal of either adoption or guardianship for two or more years and has been in his/her current placement for two or more years. The eligibility criteria was initially defined based on perceptions routinely provided by agencies that there are a sizable number of children residing in long term placements with plans of adoption/guardianship whose families are not moving forward to permanency. Based on data provided by CFSA, using FACES data, the eligibility criteria for the study was revised because the initial data did not provide an adequate number of children to include in the study population.

The revised criteria for inclusion in the study was:

A child in CFSA's care who has the permanency goal of either adoption or guardianship for two or more years who has been in his/her current placement for one or more years and whose foster/kinship parent is a potential resource for adoption/guardianship.

¹ Center for the Study of Social Policy. *LaShawn A. v. Fenty. An Assessment of the District of Columbia's Child Welfare System (as of January 31, 2009)*. April 30, 2009.

The structured interview instrument was developed by FAPAC staff and consultant to collect data on foster and kinship parents' and social workers' perceived barriers to achieving permanency for the child. Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding a list of services and processes associated with completion of an adoption or guardianship. The services and process included:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| ■ Day care | ■ Summer camp |
| ■ Respite care | ■ Accessibility |
| ■ After-school care | ■ Mental health services |
| ■ Tutoring | ■ Health care services |
| ■ Education | ■ Independent living program |
| ■ Mentoring | ■ College/post-secondary education |
| ■ Termination of parental rights (TPR) | ■ Adoption subsidy |
| ■ Child's concern regarding adoption | ■ Licensures/clearances |

If a service was identified as a barrier, respondents were subsequently asked whether it was a barrier because:

- It is something the foster/kinship parent has and is concerned about losing or not being able to access post adoption/guardianship; or
- It is something the foster/kinship parent needs and does not have; or
- It is something the foster/kinship parent may need in the future, but currently doesn't have.

For those items identified as a barrier, foster/kinship parents were also asked whether they were currently working with their social worker to address. In addition, respondents were asked to identify the most important of the identified barriers to resolve, to identify any other barriers, and asked demographic information about the respondent and child.

The social worker interview instrument was modified slightly from the foster/kinship parent instrument to change references and pronouns and to delete respondent demographic information. The instruments were reviewed by experts in child welfare and by the CFSA Institutional Review Board (IRB), which approved the study on July 11, 2008.

Interviewers were trained by FAPAC to administer the survey to foster/kinship parents and social workers during a three hour training session led by the study director. A total of seven interviewers were trained and conducted the interviews.

Letters notifying foster/kinship parents about the study, signed by the CFSA Interim Director, were mailed by FAPAC to all foster/kinship parents who met the study criteria. The letter provided an overview of the intent of the study, said that only a small sample of families would be selected to be interviewed, explained that participation in the study was voluntary and provided contact information for FAPAC for a foster/kinship parent to "opt out" of the study or to ask any questions. No foster/kinship parents contacted FAPAC to decline the study and no letters were returned as undeliverable. A similar letter was sent to social worker agencies informing them about the study and encouraging participation.

Informed consent was obtained from participants prior to their interview. Foster/kinship parents signed a consent form prior to beginning their face to face interview, and social workers were

provided a consent form via fax or e-mail and provided verbal consent prior to beginning their telephone interview. Foster/kinship parents received a gift card valued at \$25 following completion of their interview.

Using data from FACES, CFSA's child welfare database, 113 children met the study criteria based on permanency goal and length in current placement (with eligibility timeframes calculated as of November 1, 2008). (This group is referred to as the "study population" in this report.) FACES data included child's name, client ID, date of birth, permanency goal, goal start date, date of current placement, name of foster/kinship parent, name of social worker, and contact information for both foster/kinship parent and social worker. A stratified random sampling method was used to select the families and social workers for interviews. The sample population was stratified into six groups, based on permanency goal (adoption, guardianship, and petition filed) and on whether the family was working with a public (CFSA) or private agency.

To ensure the anonymity of foster/kinship parent participation, the selection of social workers from the study population to interview was made independently from the selection of foster/kinship parents. Foster/kinship parents or social workers who were caring for more than one child meeting the study criteria completed a separate interview for each child, as did social workers.

Interview instruments were coded using a unique participant code. The key to the code was maintained in a password protected database. Interview data were entered into an on-line database by FAPAC staff and converted to Microsoft Excel 2003 and SPSS Graduate Pack 13.0 for analysis. Interview instruments and consent forms were maintained in locked file cabinets.

FAPAC began contacting foster/kinship parents to schedule reviews on December 4, 2008. Foster/kinship parents were first screened to determine eligibility for inclusion in the study, being asked whether they were planning to adopt/secure guardianship of the child. For those meeting study eligibility, foster/kinship parents were invited to complete an interview at a FAPAC event or to schedule an interview at their home or other location. Contacting foster/kinship parents concluded on April 13, 2009. Up to eight attempts were made to contact all but one of the foster/kinship parents in the study population, according to the study contact protocol. Social worker contact began on March 11, 2009. Contacting social workers concluded on May 4, 2009 when FAPAC ended all data collection. All but one social worker interview were conducted over the telephone.

A limitation of this study is the sample size of foster/kinship parents and social workers interviewed. As noted above, the intended sample size was approximately sixty interviews of both foster/kinship parents and social workers, which would have provided a more representative sample; however, due to the following factors, the study was not able to complete the target number of interviews.

Identifying the children who met the study criteria was challenging. This study was conceptualized in response to reports of large numbers (reported to be over 200) of children in care who have been in long-term placements with a goal of adoption or guardianship which are not showing signs of moving to permanency. FAPAC worked with CFSA staff to develop criteria to select children from FACES who met the study eligibility criteria. The study found that a large number of children with a goal of adoption or guardianship for more than two years who were in their current placement for more than one year were in a placement where the caregiver did not intend to adopt or secure guardianship of the child. (The reason for this placement was not a purpose of the study,

so it is not clear whether the child did not have an appropriate adoption/guardianship resource available or that FACES data relating to permanency goal of the child was at the time inaccurate.)

The dynamic nature of the population (children, foster/adoptive parents and social workers) created significant challenges to conducting the interviews. The data for the sampling frame (study population) for the study was provided by CFSA in October 2008 using FACES. Interviews with foster/kinship parents began in December 2008 and were concluded in April 2009. Social worker interviews began in April 2009 and were concluded in May 2009. During this time period, as expected, some adoptions and guardianships were completed. And because the time frame of interviews between families and professionals was not concurrent it is normal that some issues related to permanency would have shifted during that time frame.

Additionally, the rate of foster/kinship parent refusal to be interviewed, difficulty in contacting foster/kinship parents, as well as the number of children who did not meet the study eligibility criteria (foster/kinship parents not intending to adopt/secure guardianship) were also challenges to securing interviews. Interviews were not conducted if a foster/kinship parent or social worker indicated that permanency had been achieved. Social worker changes at agencies also affected the ability to conduct interviews, because if the social worker identified in the sampling frame data was no longer at the agency or working with the family, it was either difficult to determine the social worker currently assigned to the family or the current social worker was not familiar enough with the family to complete an interview. (See Tables 2 and 3, below.)

These challenges should be considered when developing future research with these populations.

Results

A. Foster/Kinship Parent and Social Worker Interviews

A total of 41 foster/kinship parent interviews (36% of total study population) and 45 social worker interviews (40% of total study population) were completed. Overall, 66 of the 113 eligible subjects had an interview of some type (58% of total study population). Nineteen of the children had both a foster/kinship and social worker interview completed.

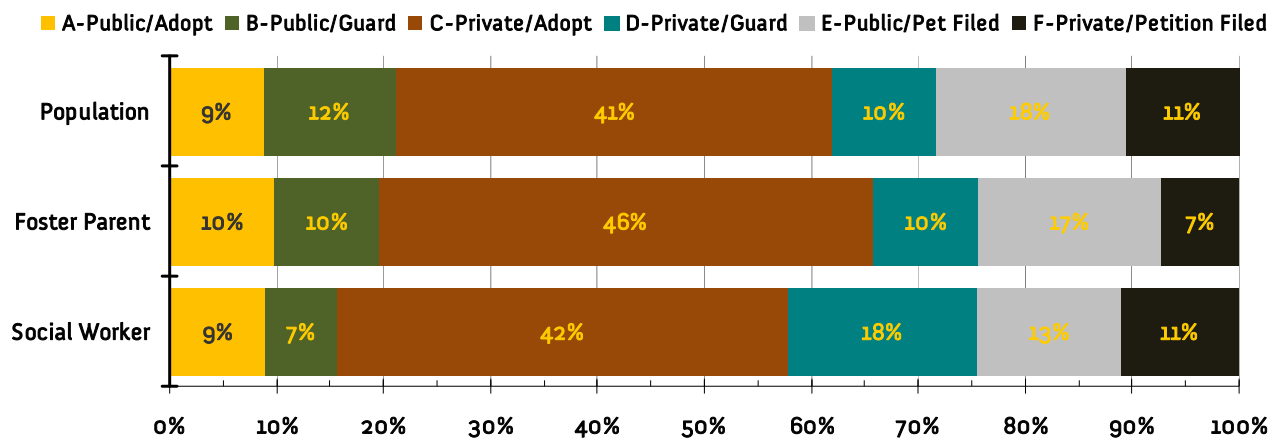
Table 1 and Figure 1 show the distribution of the eligible population and the completed interviews by strata. The largest group was children with a goal of adoption working with a private agency (40.7%) followed by children whose adoption/guardianship petition had been filed working with CFSA (17.7%).

The distribution of completed foster/kinship interviews generally mirrors the eligible population, with a slightly higher proportion of completed interviews in the Adoption/Private group, and a slightly smaller proportion in the Petition filed/Private and Guardianship/Public groups. The distribution of completed social worker interviews is similar in distribution, with smaller proportions in the Guardianship/Public and Petition Filed/Public groups, and a larger proportion in the Guardianship/Private group.

Table 1. Distribution of study population and completed interviews by sample strata (FACES data)

Sample strata	Study Population (n=113)	Foster Parent interviews (n=41)	Social Worker interviews (n=45)
Group A - Adoption/Public	10 (8.8%)	4 (9.8%)	4 (8.9%)
Group B - Guardianship/Public	14 (12.4%)	4 (9.8%)	3 (6.7%)
Group C - Adoption/Private	46 (40.7%)	19 (46.3%)	19 (42.2%)
Group D - Guardianship/Private	11 (9.7%)	4 (9.8%)	8 (17.8%)
Group E - Petition filed/Public	20 (17.7%)	7 (17.1%)	6 (13.3%)
Group F - Petition filed/Private	12 (10.6%)	3 (7.3%)	5 (11.1%)
Total	113 (100%)	41 (100%)	45 (100%)

Figure 1. Distribution of study population and completed interviews by sample strata



We made attempts to contact all foster/kinship parents in the eligible population. The initial sampling plan was to contact foster/kinship parents based on random selection within each group. Due to the number of foster/kinship parents who were contacted and declined to participate, those who could not be successfully contacted, and those who were not eligible for the study based on the telephone screening (planning to adopt/obtain guardianship), contacts were attempted with 112 of the 113 eligible subjects (99.1% of the eligible population²). Per the study contact protocol, eight telephone attempts were made to foster/kinship parents before classifying them as “unable to contact”. There were 18 foster/kinship parents whose telephone numbers were not operational at the time of FAPAC contact. CFSA was able to provide updated contact information for 16 of those foster/kinship parents.

Table 2 shows the number of foster/kinship parents interviewed by strata and overall and reasons for not interviewing the foster/kinship parents by strata and overall. Overall, 41 (36% of total) foster/kinship parents agreed to and completed an interview and 71 (64%) were not interviewed. Of the 71 foster/kinship parents who were not interviewed, 23 (32%) declined to participate in the study, 18 (25%) could not be contacted by the study despite repeated attempts, and 13 (18%) were not eligible because the foster/kinship parent indicated that they were not planning to adopt or obtain guardianship of the child. Four (6%) were not eligible because they had obtained adoption or guardianship of the child.

² One foster/kinship parent was not contacted due to an administrative error.

Table 2. Distribution of completed foster/kinship parent interviews by strata and reasons for not interviewing foster/kinship parent

Sample n=113 # (%) of total interviewed # (%) Not interviewed	Reason for not interviewing foster/kinship parent n=72 % of those not interviewed
Total	» Declined-23 (32%)
41 (36%) Interviewed	» Unable to contact 18- (25%)
72 (64%) Not interviewed	» Not eligible: Not planning to adopt/obtain guardianship-13 (18%)
	» Not eligible: Child not in home-8 (11%)
	» Not eligible: Adoption completed-4 (6%)
	» Not eligible: Child does not want to be adopted-3 (4%)
	» Interview scheduled/not completed-2 (3%)
	» Not contacted by project-1 (1%)

Overall, based on the telephone screening with foster/kinship parents, 28 children were found not to be eligible for inclusion in the study (24.7% of total).

Table 3 shows the number of social workers interviewed by strata and overall and the reasons for not interviewing social workers by strata and overall. In contrast to foster/kinship parents, only three percent of social workers who were contacted declined to be interviewed. The major reasons for not completing an interview was the completion of the adoption (25%), change in the child's permanency goal (9%), or the social worker was no longer at the agency (9%). Almost one-third of social workers (32%) were contacted at least once by FAPAC.

Table 3. Distribution of completed social worker interviews by strata and reasons for not interviewing social workers

Sample n=113 # (%) of total interviewed # (%) Not interviewed	Reason for not interviewing social worker n=68 % of those not interviewed
Total	» Unable to contact- 22 (32%)
45 (39.8%) Interviewed	» Not eligible: Adoption completed-17 (25%)
68 (60.1%) Not interviewed	» Not eligible: Permanency goal changed-6 (9%)
	» Identified social worker no longer at agency-6 (9%)
	» Child no longer on case load-5 (7%)
	» Not eligible: Child not in home- 4 (6%)
	» Interview scheduled/not completed-4 (6%)
	» Declined interview- 2 (3%)
	» Not eligible: Not specified-2 (3%)

Overall, based on the telephone screening with social workers, 29 children were found not to be eligible for inclusion in the study (26.6% of total).

Table 4 shows the location of interview and the length of interview by foster/kinship parent and social worker groups.

Table 4. Location of completed interview and length of interview

	Foster/Kinship Parent interview (n=41)	Social Worker interview (n=45)
Location of interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Home- 26 (63.4%) » FAPAC Event- 5 (12.1%) » Community Location- 4 (9.7%) » Telephone- 2 (4.8%) » FAPAC Office- 1 (2.4%) » FP Work 1- (2.4%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Telephone 44- (97.8%) » FAPAC Office- 1 (2.2%)
Length of interview (minutes)	Mean 21.8 Min 5 Max 60	Mean 11.2 Min 3 Max 21

Table 5 shows demographics of the children in the study population compared to the demographics of the children whose foster/kinship parents and/or social workers participated in the study interviews. (Note: Analysis uses data provided by FACES.) Demographics between the study and interview populations are generally comparable; differences are likely attributed to the completion of an adoption/guardianship and exclusion from the study. Table 6 shows the age distribution by age group.

Table 5. Demographics of study and interview populations (FACES data)

	Study Population (n=113)	Foster/Kinship Parent interview (n=41)	Social Worker interview (n=45)
Child Age (years) (as of 1/1/09)	Mean 12.1 Min 3.5 Max 19.5	Mean 11.8 Min 3.5 Max 18.0	Mean 11.9 Min 3.5 Max 18.4
% Male	48.7%	48.8%	51.1%
% Private Agency	61.1%	63.4%	71.1%
% Adoption goal	76.1%	80.5%	75.6%
% Guardianship goal	23.9%	19.5%	24.4%
% Residence location	DC 22.1% MD 68.1% VA 3.5% Other 6.3%	DC 19.5% MD 75.6% VA 0% Other 4.9%	DC 17.8% MD 77.8% VA 0% Other 4.4%
Days in placement (as of 1/1/09)	Mean 953 Median 823 Min 427 Max 2,161 (5.9 yrs)	Mean 984 Median 843 Min 427 Max 2,161 (5.9 yrs)	Mean 953 Median 823 Min 427 Max 2,161 (5.9 yrs)
Years with permanency goal (as of 1/1/09)	Mean 4.3 Median 3.7 Min 2.1 Max 12.0	Mean 4.5 Median 3.6 Min 2.5 Max 12.0	Mean 4.6 Median 4.1 Min 2.5 Max 8.5

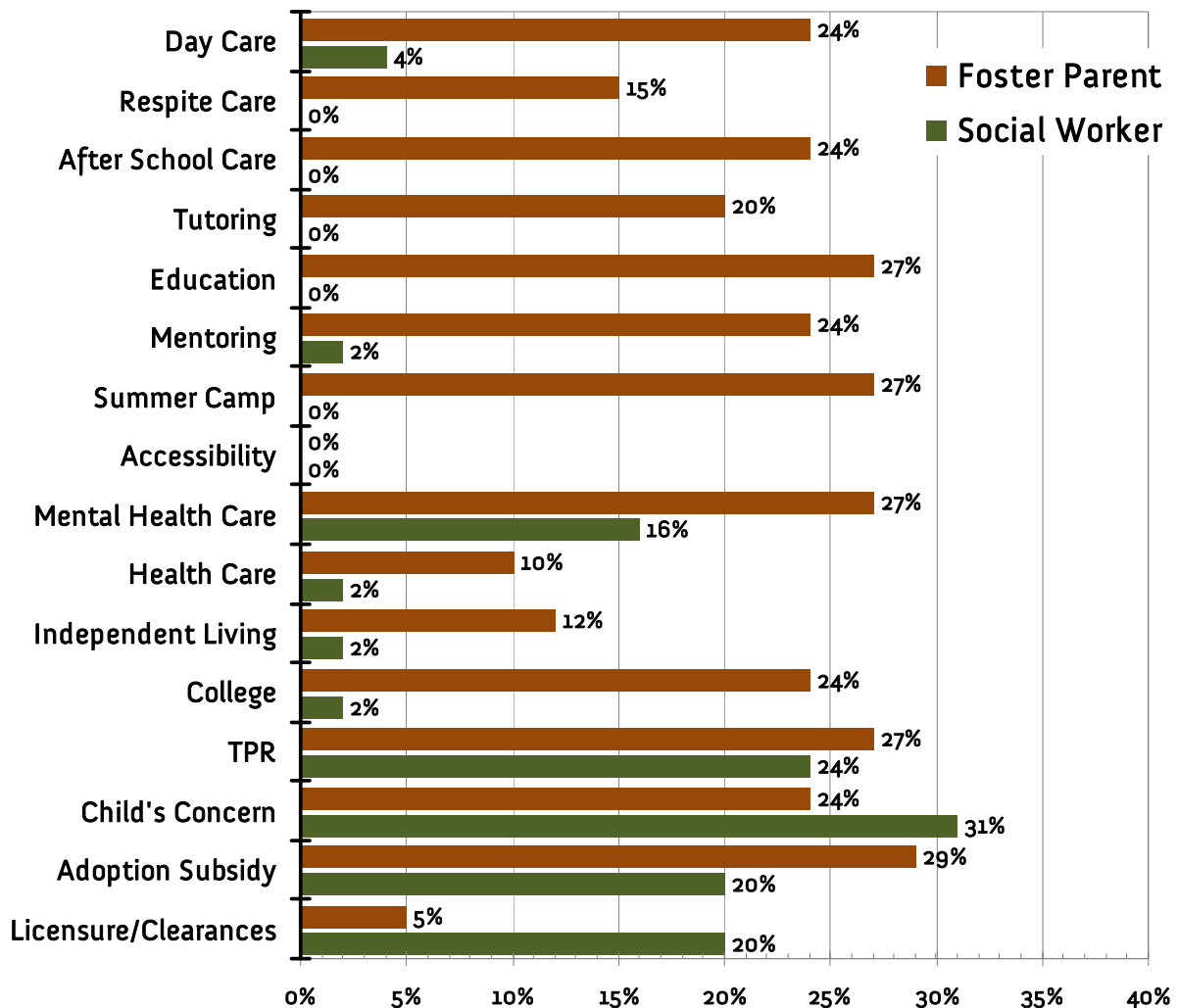
Table 6. Age distribution of study and interview populations (FACES data)

Age distribution (as of 1 Jan 2009)	Study Population (n=113)	Foster Parent interview (n=41)	Social Worker interview (n=45)
0-3 years	4.4%	2.4%	4.4%
4-7 years	15.0%	17.1%	6.7%
8-12 years	29.2%	36.6%	42.2%
13-15 years	33.6%	26.8%	33.3%
16 years and older	17.7%	17.1%	13.3%
Total	113 (100%)	41 (100%)	45 (100%)

B. Foster/Kinship Parent and Social Worker Interview Findings

Overall, interviewed foster/kinship parents were more likely to identify service barriers than interviewed social workers. Figure 2 shows the proportion of interviewed foster/kinship parents and social workers who identified a specific service or process as a barrier. Approximately one-quarter of foster/kinship parents identified the need for day care, after school care, education, mentoring, summer camp, mental health care, college as barriers; almost all of the interviewed social workers did not identify these services as barriers, with the exception of mental health care. Social workers did not identify any or identified a low rate of barriers in a number of service areas: Day care, respite care, after school care, tutoring, education, mentoring, summer camp, accessibility, health care, independent living, and college.

Figure 2. Proportion of foster/kinship parents and social workers identifying barrier



In contrast, identification of “process” barriers was more similar between the interview groups, with foster/kinship parents and social workers identifying termination of parental rights (TPR), child’s concern about adoption, and adoption subsidy in similar proportions. Social workers identified licensure/clearances to a greater degree than foster/kinship parents (20% vs. 5%).

In follow-up to the identification of a service-related barrier, respondents were asked whether:

- It is something the foster/kinship parent has and is concerned about losing or not being able to access post adoption/guardianship (Have); or
- It is something the foster/kinship parent needs and does not have (Need); or
- It is something the foster/kinship parent may need in the future, but currently doesn't have (May Need).

Figures 3 and 4 show the foster/kinship parents' and social workers' description of the barrier. As noted in Figure 2, foster/kinship parents identified more service barriers than social workers. For all but independent living and college, foster/kinship parents described a large proportion of the identified service barrier as something they currently have and were concerned about losing. While social workers identified fewer service barriers, they were similar in their description of the identified barriers, with barriers of independent living and college being more future-oriented and other barriers being more current.

Figure 3. Type of identified barrier: foster/kinship parents

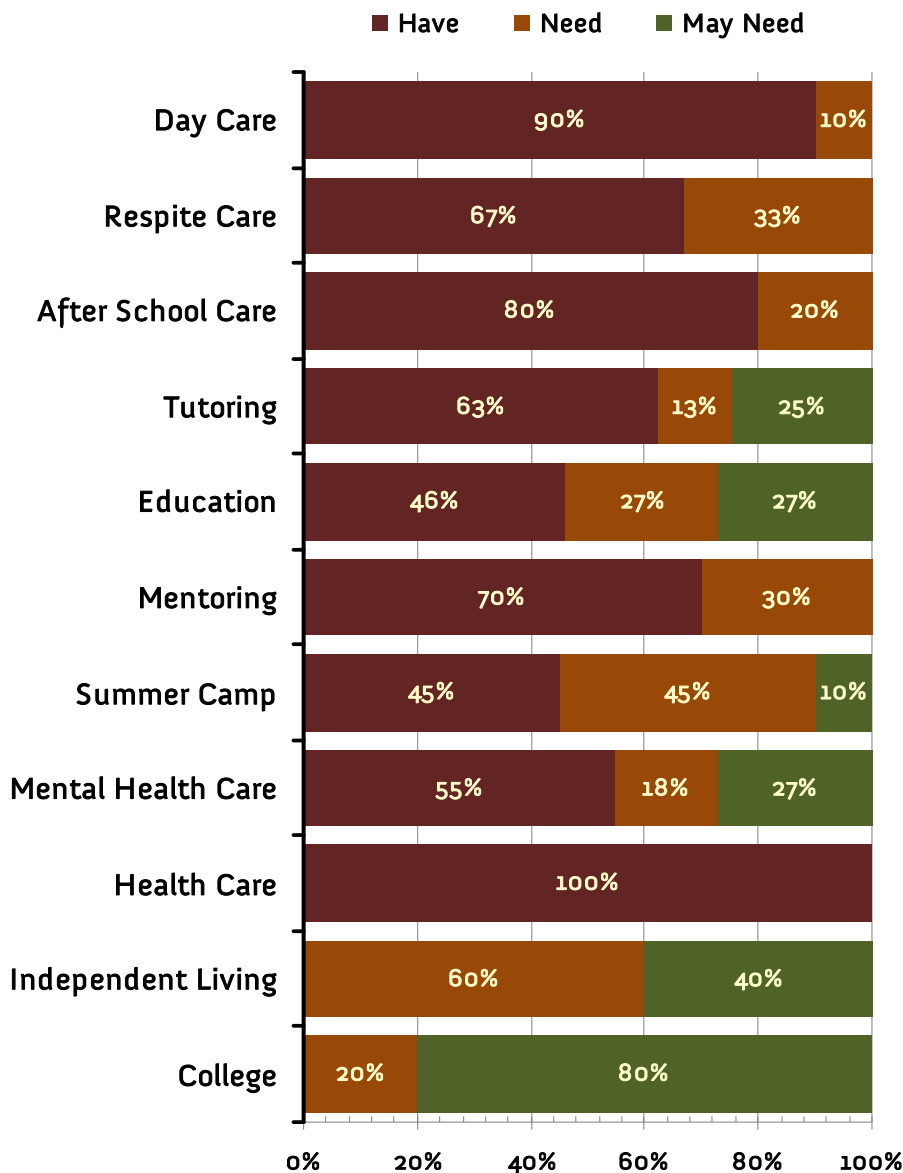


Figure 4. Type of identified barrier: social workers

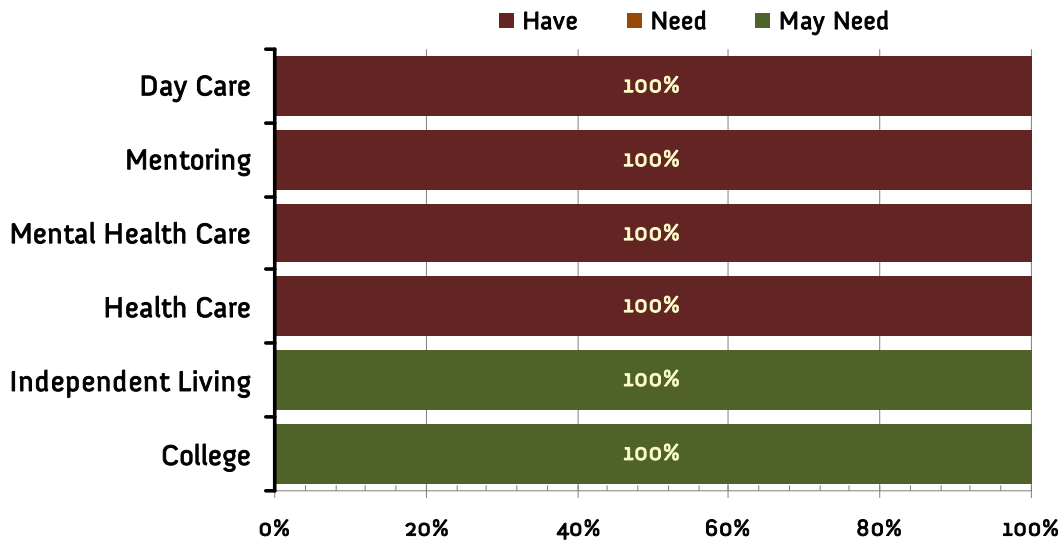
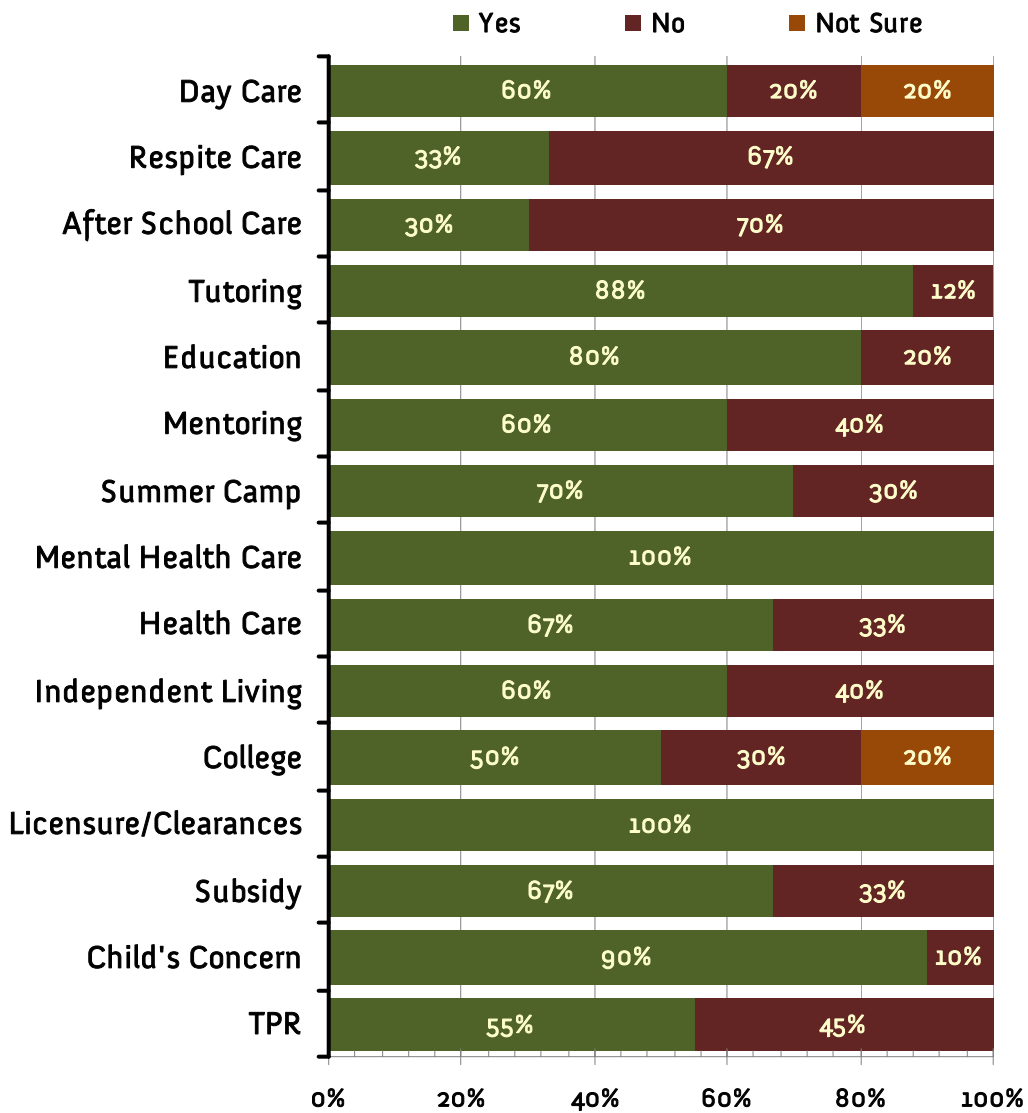


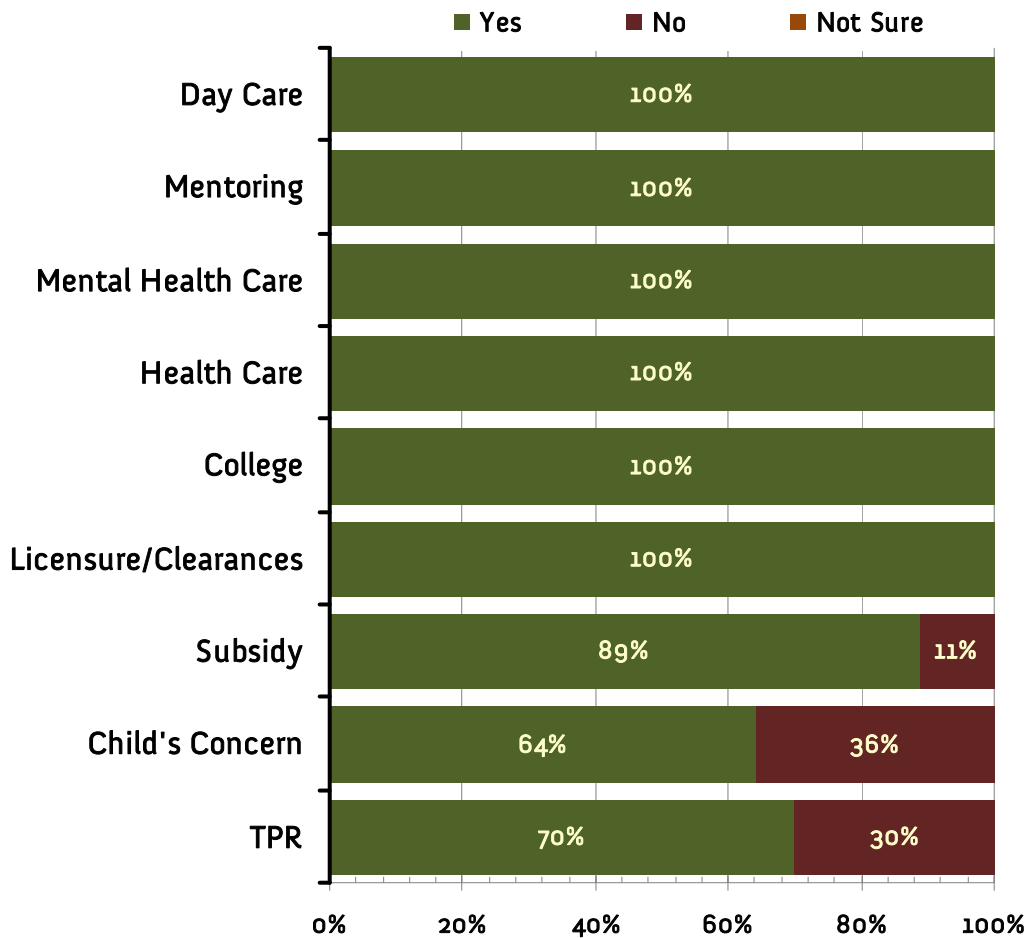
Figure 5. Addressing identified barriers: foster/kinship parents



For all identified barriers, interviewees were then asked whether they were currently working to address the barrier. Figures 5 and 6 show the foster/kinship parent and social worker responses. Foster/kinship parents had a wide range of responses of working with their social worker to address the identified barriers. For 13 of the identified barrier categories, a majority indicated they were working with their social worker to address the barrier; with all working to address mental health care and licensure/clearances. To a lesser extent, foster/kinship parents were working to address respite care and after school care needs.

In contrast, social workers indicated that they were working to address identified barriers to a greater degree, with all identified service barriers being addressed. Social workers indicate working to address child's concerns about adoption to a lesser degree than foster/kinship parent reports (64% vs. 90%).

Figure 6. Addressing identified barriers: social workers



In addition to the list of service and process barriers, foster/kinship parents and social workers were asked to identify any other barriers to permanency. Foster parents identified a wide range of other barriers. While many of these were further articulation of the barriers asked about during the structured interview, nine (22%) of foster/kinship parents expressed that their relationships and experiences with their agency (both public and private) were a barrier. Specifically, respondents noted a lack of support from and lack of an effective relationship with their social workers and agency, turnover in social workers, and lack of adequate commitment from the agency to obtaining

permanency. (These responses have been labeled as “Agency/process concerns” in Figure 7.) Five (11%) social workers expressed that foster parents had some concerns regarding the adoption and its affect on their family structure. (These responses have been coded as “Foster parent concerns” in Figure 8); two (4%) mentioned concerns regarding securing permanency for sibling groups; one (2%) mentioned the age of the foster parent.

Figure 7. Most important barrier to resolve: foster/kinship parents

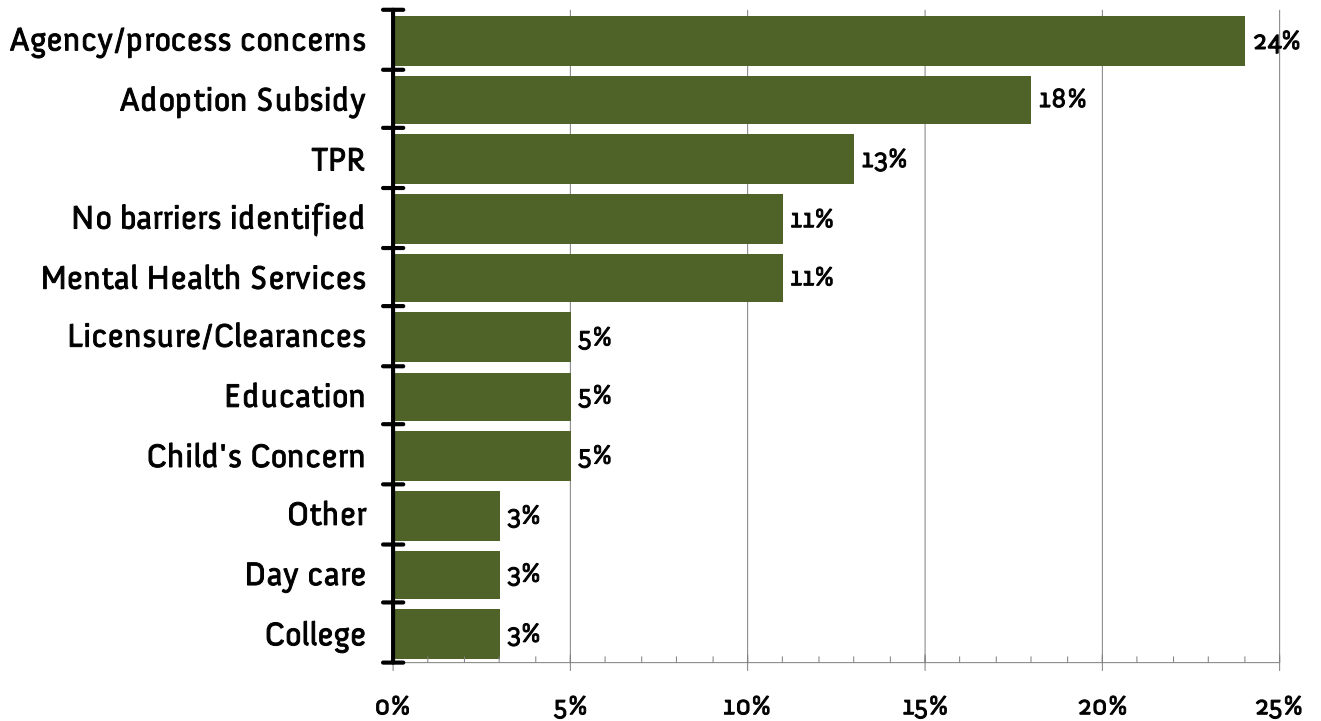
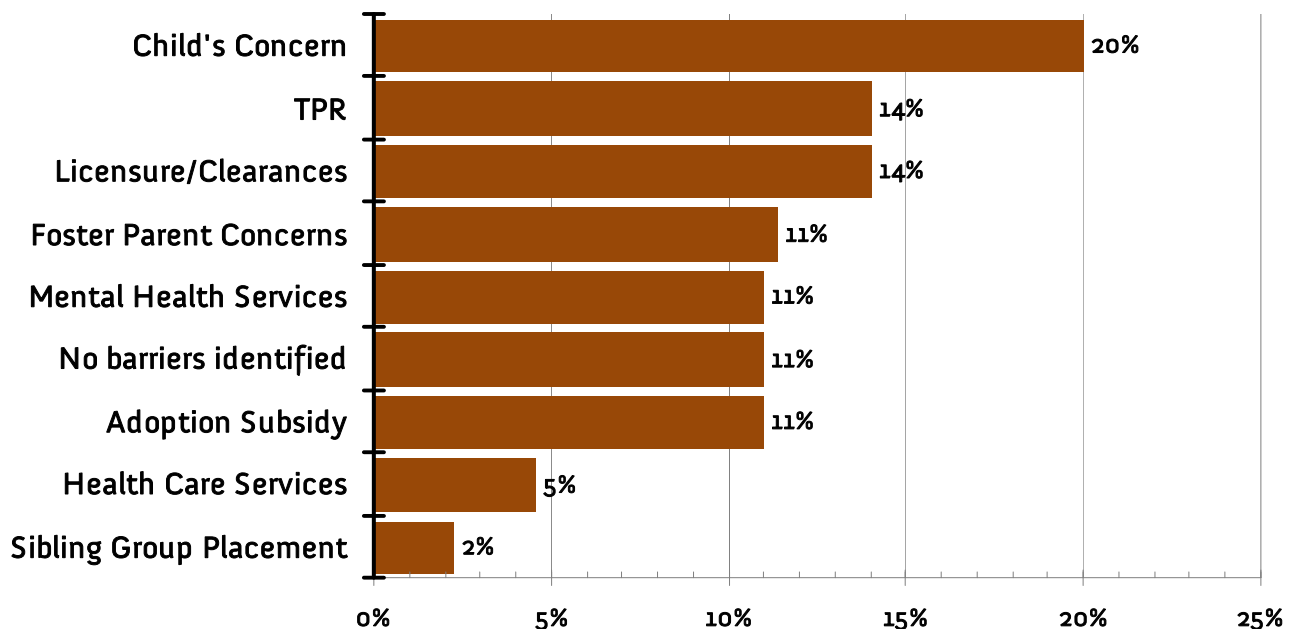


Figure 8. Most important barrier to resolve: social workers



From the barriers identified, respondents were asked to indicate which barrier was the most important one to resolve. Figures 7 and 8 show these responses. Nearly one-quarter of foster/kinship parents indicated that their concerns about the agency/process was the most

important barrier to resolve, followed by adoption subsidy and termination of parental rights (Figure 7).

It is important to note that the most important barrier to resolve identified by the foster/kinship parents, “agency/process concerns”, was not included in the list of barriers included in the interview instruments and was identified by foster/kinship parents in response to an open-ended question: “Are there any other barriers that you are experiencing with obtaining permanency for your child that I haven’t asked you about?” It is likely that if this item were included in the list of barriers, the number of foster/kinship parents identifying this as a barrier would be greater.

Social workers identified resolution of the child’s concern, termination of parental rights (TPR) and completion of licensure/clearances as the three most important barriers to resolve (Figure 8).

Discussion

The intent of this study was to systematically identify perceived barriers to achieving permanency for children with a goal of adoption or guardianship who are in long-term placement by interviewing both foster and kinship parents caring for these children and the social workers assigned to work with them to achieve their permanency goals. Findings from this study—the identification of specific barriers—could be used by CFSA and child welfare stakeholders to provide resources, develop policies and procedures, and initiate interventions to remediate these barriers to permanency for children in CFSA custody.

As described above, foster/kinship parents were more likely to identify service-related barriers than were social workers; and both groups identified process-related barriers at similar rates (except for social workers identifying licenses and clearances to a greater degree). Among service-related barriers, education and mental health care were identified as a barrier. In follow-up questioning, approximately one-half indicated that they currently had the service, but were concerned about losing the service post-adoption/guardianship. However, almost all foster/kinship parents noted that they were working with their social worker to address these service barriers. The high rates of need for education and mental health care is not unexpected. Nearly two-thirds of foster/kinship parents and social workers interviewed noted that the child had mental health care needs, and two-thirds of foster/kinship parents and three-quarters of social workers interviewed noted that the child had special education needs.

Foster/kinship parents also are concerned about services and benefits for older children, with independent living and college being identified as barriers (12% and 24%, respectively), and of these, 80% indicating that they “may need” them in the future, which indicates that foster/kinship parents are anticipating future service needs. Only one-half (50%) of foster/kinship parents indicated that they were working with their social workers to address these specific barriers.

Day care, respite care and after school care were also identified as barriers by foster/kinship parents. But only one-third of foster/kinship parents indicated that they were working with their social workers to address respite and after-school care barriers (33% and 30%, respectively.) However,

several respondents also noted that they were likely to lose these services once the adoption/guardianship was finalized.

Among the barriers identified by social workers, service-related barriers were being addressed, while process barriers of subsidy, child's concern, and termination of parental rights (TPR) were not being addressed by all social workers. The exception to this is licensure/clearances, which was reported by 100% of the social workers as being addressed.

The child's concern about adoption/guardianship was also identified as a barrier by both foster/kinship parents and social workers (24% and 31%, respectively); however, only 64% of social workers indicated that they were working to address this barrier, compared to 90% of foster/kinship parents. Social workers also identified concerns of foster parents as a barrier to permanency, with 11% of interviewed social workers indicating that it was the most important barrier to resolve. The nature of these concerns related to changes in the family structure and the age and health status of the foster/kinship parent.

An unexpected finding was the number of foster/kinship parents who expressed difficulties in their relationship with the agency in working to permanency and resolving identified barriers. As documented by the interviewers, these concerns include:

- Staff turnover at agencies affecting continuity of service planning and relationship building.
- Feeling that the agency is not supportive of the foster/kinship family in achieving permanency.
- Poor communication between social worker and family.

Social workers report working with the family for an average of 1.3 years (median length 11 months, min. 2 months, max. 7 years). Foster/kinship parents reported caring for the child for an average of 3.9 years (median length 3.9 years, min. 1.3 years, max. 9 years). These disparities in length of care may be a source of the identified difficulties in communication, support and service planning.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, we make the following recommendations for the District to improve efforts to achieve permanency for children:

1. Verify permanency goals and status for each child who has the goal of adoption or guardianship by meeting with the current foster family. Build the capacity of CFSA data management system to capture data related to potential permanency status of placements.
2. Train social workers to validate families' assessments of permanency barriers and to assist families in gaining access to services that can carry them post-adoption/guardianship. Get a written concurrence statement between the family and the worker about the barriers to permanence and an action plan for working through barriers. Elevate to upper level administration those situations where barriers appear too big to resolve on the social worker level, replacing current

practice with an active agency approach and philosophy focused upon eliminating barriers.

3. Provide training for workers and parents on how to address children's adoption-related concerns and fears.
4. Increase the availability, accessibility and appropriateness of mental health and educational resources to meet current and future needs of children as they age.
5. Implement significant and consistent efforts to decrease placement disruptions and to assist families and youth in building stable family units that support permanency.
6. Develop future-oriented service plans jointly with foster/kinship parents and agencies and routinely jointly review them for progress in achievement. Establish administrative oversight to ensure that agency turnover of social workers does not continue to adversely affect the implementation of these service plans. Integrate discussion of subsidy needs into the service planning process.
7. Significantly improve communication between foster/kinship parents and social workers and agencies.
8. Increase the transparency and equitability of the adoption subsidy process and make it less adversarial and more supportive of families and children. Consider including more services in negotiated agreements. Amend subsidy policy and protocol to respond to systemic permanency barriers.
9. Continue to consider the extension of adoption subsidy and guardianship to ages 18-21, especially for children achieving permanence at an older age.
10. Consider changing legislation to allow legal guardianship by non-kin so that caregivers of older youth who won't consent to being adopted can opt for guardianship.

Interview instruments:

- Foster/kinship parents
- Social workers

**Interview Instrument: Foster/Kinship Family
FAPAC Efforts towards permanency study**

Child code:
Date of interview:
Name of interviewer:
Start time of interview:
End time of interview:
Location of interview: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> FAPAC event <input type="checkbox"/> Community location <input type="checkbox"/> Other

[Note to interviewer: For foster/kinship parents who are caring for more than one child who is in the identified sample, complete one instrument for each child. Clarify with the interviewee which child the questions pertain to at the start of the interview, and remind as necessary.]

Section 1

Many foster and kinship parents have experienced barriers to achieving permanency for their foster child. I will read some of these barriers. For each of these, please tell me if it is or is not currently a barrier to achieving permanency for you/your child. If it is a barrier, I will then ask you some further questions about this barrier.

If you don't know, or aren't sure, it's OK to tell me that too.

Do you have any questions before we begin? [RESPOND TO QUESTIONS; BEGIN INTERVIEW]

1. Day care (Someone to care for your child while you are at work.)

A		B		C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☛ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:	☛ Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			

2. Respite care (Someone to care for your child for a short term so you can do errands, or just have a break.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

3. After-school care (Someone to care for your child after school so you can work.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

4. Tutoring (Someone to provide tutoring or assistance with school work to your child.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

5. Education (A school that is appropriate for your child’s educational needs.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

6. Mentoring (A program that can provide a “mentor” to your child.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

7. Summer Camp (A summer program that your child can attend during summer when school is not in session.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

8. **Accessibility** (If your child has a disability, modifying you home with ramps, providing accessible vehicles or transportation services.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☞ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	☞ Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

9. **Mental health services** (A professional who addresses psychological or psychiatric needs. This may include screening and treatment for behavioral concerns, grief counseling, crisis intervention, or therapists.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☞ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	☞ Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

10. **Health care services** (Medical care that your child needs.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☞ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	☞ Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

11. Independent Living programs (A program that can help your child transition to adult services.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☞ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	☞ Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

12. College/Post-secondary education (College/post-secondary education—education after completion of high school.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☞ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that you currently have/use and you are concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that you need or you may need in the future, but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	☞ Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

Non-service-related issues

The following questions relate to some other concerns or barriers that you may be experiencing. Unlike the previous questions, these do not directly address service needs.

13. Termination of parental rights (TPR) (Issues relating to termination of parental rights so that an adoption can proceed.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency. ▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM		
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure ▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM		
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer] ▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM		

14. Child's concerns regarding adoption (Issues relating to the child's concerns regarding adoption and permanency.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency. ▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM		
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure ▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM		
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer] ▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM		

15. Adoption subsidy (Providing you with financial support after your adoption is finalized.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with your social worker to address? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency. ▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM		
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure ▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM		
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer] ▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM		

16. Licensure/Clearances (The foster parent/home obtaining required licenses and clearances.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

17. Are there any other barriers that you are experiencing with obtaining permanency for your child that I haven't asked you about? If Yes, please briefly tell me about them:

- None [Go to Section 2]
- Yes [Briefly list these as stated by the interviewee.]

18. Of the items that you told me were a current barrier to permanency, which one of these do you think is the most important to resolve?

[From the list below, check the response—please make sure that the interviewee indicated that this was a barrier. If the interviewee does not recall which barriers she/he indicated, then please read the barriers identified above (item A in each question.)]

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day care
<input type="checkbox"/> Respite care
<input type="checkbox"/> After school care
<input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring
<input type="checkbox"/> Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring
<input type="checkbox"/> Summer camp
<input type="checkbox"/> Accessibility
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental health services | <input type="checkbox"/> Health care services
<input type="checkbox"/> Independent living program
<input type="checkbox"/> Termination of parental rights
<input type="checkbox"/> Child's concerns
<input type="checkbox"/> Adoption subsidy
<input type="checkbox"/> Licensure/Clearances
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify |
|--|---|

Section 2. Foster/Kinship Parent Demographics *(If you are conducting more than one interview with this foster/kinship parent, then this section needs to be completed only once.)*

These questions are about you.

19. What is your age?

- 18- 29
- 30 -39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 or above
- Refused to answer

20. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Refused to answer

21. Where do you live?

- DC
- Maryland
- Virginia
- Refused to answer

22. What is your current employment status?

- Employed: More than 20 hours a week
- Employed: 20 or fewer hours a week
- Not employed: But I am looking for work
- Not employed: I am **not** looking for work
- Retired
- Other: Specify:
- Refused to answer

Section 3. Child Demographics

These questions are about your child.

23. What is your child's age?

___ years old Refused to answer

24. What is your child's gender?

- Female
- Male
- Refused to answer

25. How many years have you been caring for your child in your home?

___ years Refused to answer

26. What type of foster care payment are you currently receiving?

- Traditional
- Therapeutic
- Kinship caregiver
- Not sure
- Refused to answer

27. Does your child have any special or continuing medical care needs?

- Yes
- No
- Refused to answer

28. Does your child have any continuing mental health care needs?

- Yes
- No
- Refused to answer

29. Does your child have any physical disabilities?

- Yes
- No
- Refused to answer

30. Does your child have any special educational needs?

- Yes
- No
- Refused to answer

Thank you for your time.

[Offer them the list of resources and the gift card per project protocol.]

**Interview Instrument: Social Workers
FAPAC Efforts towards permanency study**

Child code:
Date of interview:
Name of interviewer:
Start time of interview:
End time of interview:
Location of interview: <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone <input type="checkbox"/> Other/specify:

FAPAC, in collaboration with CFSA is conducting a study of foster/kinship parents who are experiencing delays in achieving permanency. As part of this study, we are interviewing foster/kinship parents and social workers who are working with these families.

These interviews ask about specific barriers to achieving permanency (either adoption or guardianship). Information obtained from these interviews will be used to write a report about barriers to permanency. We will report only aggregated data and will not report any individual—social worker, foster/kinship, or child-specific information. This interview will take about fifteen minutes to complete.

Before we begin, this interview will ask questions about [CHILD’S NAME]. You should answer these questions as they relate to only to this child and not to any other child that may be cared for by his/her foster/kinship parent.

Section 1

Many foster and kinship parents have experienced barriers to achieving permanency for their foster child. I will read some of these barriers. For each of these, please tell me if it is or is not a barrier to achieving permanency **currently experienced** by this family/child. If it is a barrier, I will then ask you some further questions about this barrier.

If you don’t know, or aren’t sure, it’s OK to tell me that too.

Do you have any questions before we begin? [RESPOND TO QUESTIONS; BEGIN INTERVIEW]

1. Day care (Someone to care for the child while the caregiver at work.)

A		B		C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☛ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don’t currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don’t want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don’t have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don’t have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/Specify:	☛ Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			

2. Respite care (Someone to care for the child for a short term so the caregiver can do errands, or just have a break.)

A		B		C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☞ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/ Specify:	☞ Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			

3. After-school care (Someone to care for the child after school so the caregiver can work.)

A		B		C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☞ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/ Specify:	☞ Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			

4. Tutoring (Someone to provide tutoring or assistance with school work to the child.)

A		B		C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☞ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/ Specify:	☞ Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			

5. Education (A school that is appropriate for the child's educational needs.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/ Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	(Empty)	
(Empty)		

6. Mentoring (A program that can provide a "mentor" to the child.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/ Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	(Empty)	
(Empty)		

7. Summer Camp (A summer program that the child can attend during summer when school is not in session.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/ Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	(Empty)	
(Empty)		

8. **Accessibility** (If the child has a disability, modifying the caregiver 's home with ramps, providing accessible vehicles or transportation services.)

A		B		C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☛ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/ Specify:	☛ Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			

9. **Mental health services** (A professional who addresses psychological or psychiatric needs. This may include screening and treatment for behavioral concerns, grief counseling, crisis intervention, or therapists.)

A		B		C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☛ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/ Specify:	☛ Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			

10. **Health care services** (Medical care that the child needs.)

A		B		C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	☛ If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/ Specify:	☛ Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM			

11. Independent Living programs (A program that can help the child transition to adult services.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/ Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

12. College/Post-secondary education (College/post-secondary education—education after completion of high school.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that the family currently has and is concerned about losing it or not being able to access it OR is it a barrier because it is something that they need or may need in the future but don't currently have?	<input type="checkbox"/> Currently have and don't want to lose it <input type="checkbox"/> Need; but don't have it <input type="checkbox"/> May need in the future; but don't have it now <input type="checkbox"/> Other/ Specify:
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

Non-service-related issues

The following questions relate to some other concerns or barriers that you may be experiencing. Unlike the previous questions, these do not directly address service needs.

13. Termination of parental rights (TPR) (Issues relating to termination of parental rights so that adoption can proceed.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address?
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

14. Child's concerns regarding adoption (Issues relating to the child's concerns regarding adoption and permanency.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

15. Adoption subsidy (Providing you with financial support after the adoption is finalized.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If YES: Is this a barrier because it is something that may end when the child turns 18 years old, because of the differences in subsidy rates, or because of another reason? <input type="checkbox"/> Because it may end when the child turns 18 <input type="checkbox"/> Because of the differences in subsidy rates <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

16. Licensure/Clearances (The foster parent/home obtaining required licenses and clearances.)

A	B	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is currently a barrier to permanency		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Is this something that you are currently working with the family to address? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/> No, this is not currently a barrier to permanency.	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	
<input type="checkbox"/> [Refused to answer]	▶▶ GO TO NEXT ITEM	

17. Are there any other barriers that this family/child is experiencing with achieving permanency that I haven't asked you about? If Yes, please briefly tell me about them:

- None [Go to Section 2]
- Yes [Briefly list these as stated by the interviewee.]

18. Of the items that you told me were a current barrier to permanency, which one of these do you think is the most important to resolve?

[From the list below, check the response—please make sure that the interviewee indicated that this was a barrier. If the interviewee does not recall which barriers she/he indicated, then please read the barriers identified above (item A in each question.)]

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day care | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respite care | <input type="checkbox"/> Health care services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> After school care | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent living program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Termination of parental rights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Child's concerns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Adoption subsidy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Summer camp | <input type="checkbox"/> Licensure/clearances |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Specify |

Section 2.

These questions are specific to the child you are working with.

19. How many years have you been working with this family/child?

___ years ___ months Refused to answer

20. Does this child have any special or continuing medical care needs?

- Yes
- No
- Refused to answer

21. Does this child have any continuing mental health care needs?

- Yes
- No
- Refused to answer

22. Does this child have any physical disabilities?

- Yes
- No
- Refused to answer

23. Does this child have any special educational needs?

- Yes
- No
- Refused to answer

[END INTERVIEW} Thank you for your time.



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The mission of The Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center is to improve the lives of children in the DC child welfare system by empowering their foster, kinship, and adoptive parents to advocate for their children's needs and by assuring the inclusion of these perspectives at every relevant table.