

CFC Trainings and Services Implemented to Improve Foster/Adoptive Parents Satisfaction

Ashley Jo Gamblin

University of Louisville

### Abstract

The travesty that occurred in Florida has made many states re-examine the quality of service their Cabinets are providing to their foster/adoptive parents and foster children. Kentucky's, Secretary of the Cabinet For Families and Children Viola Miller has made it her personal goal and agenda to make sure that our foster/adoptive parents and foster children are getting satisfactory services in order to promote healthy and safe environments for Kentucky's children. The Cabinet is using research, training and alternate services to enhance the quality of services being providing to our foster/adoptive families and children. Some of the trainings and services that have been implemented in the past several months are the Kentucky Foster Care Census, Family First Hotline, Foster Parent Quarterly Meetings, Foster Parent Network, Internal Validation of Records and in the near future we will be conducting CQI meeting with foster families. The research question is "Are the newly implemented trainings and services increasing foster/adoptive parent satisfaction?" Another foster/adoptive parent satisfaction survey with foster/adoptive parents, conducted in the Pennyrile Region attempts to evaluate if the quality of services has improved with the implementation of the new services and trainings. The Cabinet For Families and Children will receive a copy of the report of this study.

## CFC Trainings and Services Implemented to Improve Foster/Adoptive Parents Satisfaction

### Description of Program

The Recruitment and Certification teams began as pilot projects in 1985 in various regions before being implemented in the Pennyrile Region. In April of 1986, the Recruitment and Certification team was unveiled in the Pennyrile Region. The Recruitment and Certification workers are responsible for recruiting foster/adoptive families statewide. They also provide support to the certified foster/adoptive families; help the intake and ongoing teams place children that come into the State's care and assist in the adoption process. The travesty that occurred in Florida has made many states re-examine the quality of service their Cabinets are providing to their foster/adoptive parents and foster children. Kentucky is just one of those states.

Kentucky's, Secretary of the Cabinet For Families and Children Viola Miller, has made it her personal goal and agenda to make sure that our foster/adoptive parents and foster children are getting satisfactory services in order to promote healthy and safe environments for Kentucky's children. The Cabinet is using research, training and alternate services to enhance the quality of services being providing to our foster/adoptive families and children. Secretary Miller has a new idea to enhance quality services almost every day. Some of the trainings and services that have been implemented in the past several months are the Kentucky Foster Care Census, Family First Hotline, Foster Parent Quarterly Meetings, Foster Parent Network, Internal Validation of Records and in the near future we will be conducting CQI meeting with foster families.

### Purpose of Study:

The Cabinet just completed a customer satisfaction survey in September of 2002 and one of the target populations was the foster/adoptive parents'. This customer satisfaction survey was conducted all over the state of Kentucky but the results were narrowed down in each region. The

foster/adoptive parents in the Pennyrile Region are the focus of the targeted population in regards to this study. The overall finding in this region was that foster and adoptive parents were satisfied with their partnership with the Cabinet for Families and Children, however there were some dissatisfaction recorded. The customer satisfaction survey was completed before several of the new trainings and services were implemented. Another foster/adoptive parent satisfaction survey was conducted in the Pennyrile Region with foster/adoptive families in an attempt to evaluate if the quality of services has improved with the implementation of the new services and training's.

This researcher sets out to determine if the newly implemented training's and services are benefiting the foster/adoptive parents or if it is not. If the research proves that these new implementations are not beneficial then the Cabinet For Families and Children will have to re-evaluate the trainings and services and decide whether to continue putting money, time and effort into these programs.

#### Literature Review:

Much research has been done on foster/adoptive parent satisfaction. Mayfield (1999) reported that social workers influence foster parent satisfaction. Mayfield found that the foster parents are more likely to be satisfied with their role if they receive support and encouragement from the social workers that they work with. Co-director of the study, Nolan Rindfleisch, recommended that the social service agencies establish a support plan to enhance the working relationship between the social workers and the foster parents to increase the foster parents' satisfaction.

Brown and Calder (2000) stated that there is a widespread shortage of foster parents and the difficulty recruiting and retaining foster parents has been blamed on an inadequate system of

support from the social workers they work with. A study was conducted to find out the best way to improve the responsiveness of the system to the foster parents needs. The participating foster parents were asked to describe their needs in response to the question: “What do you need to be a good foster parent?” The responses to the question were put through statistical thematic analysis or concept mapping. Concept mapping provides a means to promote “trustworthiness”. Brown and Calder’s conclusion stated that the foster parents reported needing to have frequent contact, advice and feedback from the child’s worker, other foster parents and other professionals.

Data Trends suggest that turnover among foster parents presents a great threat to our child welfare system. The foster parents play a crucial role in efforts to protect and nurture the children that come into care. North Carolina’s Division of Social Work and the Family and Children’s Resource Program (2000) found that when asking foster parents why they stop fostering, their response was that they failed to get the support and recognition they deserve for caring for the children and problems with policy, practices and sometimes problems with the children’s behavior’s. Ensuring quality foster care and adequate support for foster families can be challenging. Data Trends report that foster parents need increased training and support to reduce strain and keep the foster parents happy with their experience as foster parents.

Buehlaer, Orme and Rhodes (2001) examined why some foster families continue to foster whereas others do not. Some of the reasons they found were the lack of agency support, poor communication with the caseworkers, lack of say in the foster child’s future and the difficulties with the foster children’s behavior. The findings stated that the majority of foster families are receiving services where they identified a need. There is only a small percent that report unmet needs.

Foster parents are on the front lines providing the services to the children in states care. Foster parents are crucial to successful visits regarding the child and the biological parents. They can fully support the child in their home when they are seen as part of the team serving the child and the family. This means that the foster parents should be seen as professionals and colleagues by the social workers (Bushnell, 2002).

What does all of this mean to the state's children? Douglas Nelson (2001) reported that research shows that children who spend their adolescence in foster care are headed for unhappy outcomes as young adults. He said that these former children have a higher rate of homelessness, academic failure and physical and mental health problems are pervasive.

What is the future of the child and family welfare system? Family welfare continues to be severely stressed despite the new resources and ideas for reshaping the practice (Maluccio, 2000). Practitioners, policymakers and administrators seek new solutions to many of the field's challenges. There is a growing importance on outcome accountability in family foster care. This means new funding arrangements, new calls for evidence regarding effectiveness of services. Maluccio reports that some are re-thinking the idea of institutional or residential care for many of the children that come into care.

The overall finding regarding the foster/adoptive parents satisfaction surveys in Kentucky's Pennyrile Region was that foster and adoptive parents were satisfied with their partnership with the Cabinet for Families and Children, however there were some dissatisfaction recorded. Numerous states have the same concerns as Kentucky. They want to find a way to lower foster care retention and increase foster parent satisfaction to help promote safer and healthier environments for the children that come into states care.

Quantitative question:

Are Foster/Adoptive parents receiving satisfactory services in order to promote healthy and safe environments for Kentucky's children?

Method:

A foster/adoptive parent satisfaction survey was conducted with 75 foster/adoptive parents. The active foster/adoptive parents were invited to participate in the study. The exact same survey that was used for the customer satisfaction survey in 2002 was sent out for this study. The survey information collected included, how the agency values the foster/adoptive parents work, receive timely reimbursement, provided with resources to care for the child in their home, receive information timely, receive necessary training, receives assistance from their R&C worker, they contribute to the stability and safety of the children in their home, receives returned phone calls in a timely manner, their foster child receives quality visits, staff are professional and courteous, easy to schedule appointments with staff and would they recommend other people to become foster or adoptive parents. (See appendix B). The information gathered from this study was compared to the customer satisfaction survey conducted in 2002. The information was categorized and dominant themes were examined to determine if the newly implemented training's and services are increasing foster/adoptive parent satisfaction. The significance of this information was put into a final report for examination by interested parties employed by the Cabinet For Families and Children, in hopes of providing useful information regarding the newly implemented training's and services designed to improve foster/adoptive parent satisfaction.

Qualitative question:

Are the newly implemented training's and services increasing foster/adoptive parent satisfaction?

Method:

The qualitative piece was developed from the information gathered from the subjective data on the survey sent out to the foster/adoptive parents in the Pennyrile Region. The foster parents that were invited to participate in the study were given a place for suggestions and/or comments at the end of the survey. (See appendix C). It was hoped that the foster/adoptive parents could provide insight into providing satisfactory services. Data was analyzed recording themes throughout the responses.

#### Description of Informed Consent Procedures:

Approximately 75 foster/adoptive parents in the Pennyrile Region were invited to participate in the study. Along with the survey a transmittal form that waived the consent form was sent. The transmittal letter instructed the foster/adoptive parents to complete the survey and return it to the researcher in the self addressed and stamped envelope if they agreed to take part in the study. In the transmittal form, every effort was made to clarify the purpose of the research study. The sponsor's name was included.

Surveying methods were addressed in the explanation of procedures. Any and all potential risks to the individual were explained. Benefits of the study, potential agency enhancements and future benefits to the individuals and others were explored.

Foster/adoptive parents were invited to participate voluntarily. It was explained that they could withdraw from that study at any time without penalty. It was also explained that they could decline to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable.

Information concerning the study including the dignity and rights of the individuals was explained and every effort was made to answer questions regarding intent, methodology, and the outcome of the study. Information regarding the Human Studies committee was presented to further clarify questions regarding the individuals' rights. (See Appendix A).



### Quantitative Results:

The satisfaction level of the foster and/or adoptive parents appear to be increasing with the exception of receiving timely information and recommending other people to become foster or adoptive families. The satisfaction level of receiving timely information has gone down .9% since September 2002 and the percentage of foster/adoptive parent's willing to recommend other people to become foster or adoptive families has gone down .7% since September 2002. (See Appendix D and E).

A Total Satisfaction Score was calculated by adding the responses from all 12 questions. The range of possible score is between 12 and 60 points. The average total satisfaction rating is 49.8 of these 60 points. One way to consider that 49.8 is 83% of the total possible score of 60 points.

In conclusion, 83% of the foster/adoptive parents that responded to the survey are satisfied with their relationship with the Cabinet for Families and Children compared to the 81.1% in last years survey.

### Limitations of Quantitative Study:

There were several limitations noted during the research. The researcher had a limited time frame to obtain the data due to receiving a late approval for the study. The researcher also faced limited responses from the foster/adoptive parents in the Pennyrile Region. In 2002, there were 81 active foster/adoptive parents in the region and this year there are only 75.

### Qualitative Results:

The qualitative research came from the additional comments and suggestions area located at the end of the survey that was sent out. Four foster/adoptive parents included written comments that were coded as positive, neutral suggestions and/or comments or negative.

However, there were no negative comments made. Some of the positive comments and/or suggestions were as follows: We are a very fortunate region to have such dedicated, friendly and helpful staff. Whenever a problem arises help is on the way. Some of the neutral suggestions and/or comments that were noted are as follows: Provide evening trainings for those foster/adoptive parents that work. Provide Saturday trainings for those foster/adoptive parents that work during the week. Foster/adoptive parents should attend court hearings and have their opinions voiced to the judge. Foster/adoptive parents and staff need to listen to each other. Staff shouldn't resent suggestions by the foster parents. They should listen and give good reasons why the suggestion won't work.

#### Qualitative Themes:

The major themes that were recorded from the subjective data were that foster/adoptive parents provided neutral suggestions and/or comments, there were no negative suggestions or comments noted, and the written comments were made by the respondents that have had children placed in their home within the last six months.

#### Limitations in Qualitative Research:

There were several limitations noted during the research. The researcher had a limited time frame to obtain the data due to receiving a late approval for the study. The response to the survey as a whole was limited. The researcher also faced limited responses from the foster/adoptive parents in the comment and suggestion area.

#### Conclusion:

Overall, foster/adoptive parent's satisfaction with their partnership with the Cabinet for Families and Children has increased since newly implemented trainings and services have been offered. The overall total satisfaction score from last year has increased from 81.1% to 83%.

The level of satisfaction regarding each survey question has increased with the exception of receiving information in a timely manner and the foster/adoptive parent's willingness to recommend others to become foster/adoptive parents.

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APPENDIX A

Client Satisfaction Survey – 1<sup>st</sup> Cover Letter

(Letterhead of Researcher or University of Louisville)

March 18, 2003

Dear Foster/Adoptive Parent:

You are invited to participate in a research study to determine if the newly implemented training and services are increasing your satisfaction as a foster/adoptive parent. This is the same Customer Satisfaction Survey that you completed earlier for the Cabinet for Families and Children prior to the implementation of several new services and training programs. This study will help evaluate these new services and training, and will provide recommendations concerning their continuance or improvement. Approximately 85 foster/adoptive parents from the Pennyriple Region are being invited to participate in this study.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and anonymous, but even if it were not anonymous, failure to participate would involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If your identity should become known somehow to the researchers, your confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by law. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this study; however, you are free not answer any questions that make you uncomfortable

This study is being conducted by Dr. Nancy Keeton and Ashley Gamblin, MSW Intern, and sponsored by the Department of Social Work at the University of Louisville. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Ashley Gamblin at (270) 824-7566. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Human Studies Committees Office at the University of Louisville (502) 852-5188 or the Cabinet for Families and Children Institutional Review Board (IRB) Administrator (502) 564-2767 x4102.

If you are willing to assist in this research effort in accordance with the conditions outlined above, please complete the enclosed survey, and return it to the address on the stamped envelope also enclosed. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Ashley Gamblin  
Researcher

Enclosure: Foster/Adoptive Parent Satisfaction Survey

## APPENDIX B

Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children

### **FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT SATISFACTION SURVEY**

We would appreciate your opinion on how we are doing business. Your opinion, as our partner, is greatly valued.

Have you had a child in your care at any time during the past six months?    Yes    No

**1. The agency values my work with families and children.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
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**2. I contribute to the stability and safety of the individuals and families with whom I work.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
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**3. My R&C worker assists me in the management of my work with the foster children.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
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**4. I receive the training necessary to be successful in my job.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
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**5. I receive information in a timely manner.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
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**6. I am provided with the resources to care for foster children.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
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**7. Reimbursement is timely.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
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-OVER-



**8. My calls are returned in a timely manner.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
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**9. My foster child receives quality visits from their protection worker.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
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**10. Staff are professional and courteous to me and my family.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
--	--	---	-------------------------------------	--

**11. I would recommend other people to become a foster or adoptive family.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
--	--	---	-------------------------------------	--

**12. It is easy to make an appointment with the staff.**

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Undecided	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly Agree
--	--	---	-------------------------------------	--

If, at any time, you feel you have a complaint, please contact any worker or call the regional office for assistance in making a complaint.

Suggestions or comments:

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**Please return this survey in the envelope provided.**

**We recognize that children are our greatest natural resource, individuals and their families are the most critical component of a strong society and that each must be afforded safe, secure and nurturing homes.**

# CFC Trainings and Services Implented to Improve Foster/Adoptive Parents Satisfaction

# Recruitment and Certification Team

- The Recruitment and Certification teams began as pilot projects in 1985 in various regions before being implemented in the Pennyrile Region. In April of 1986, the Recruitment and Certification team was unveiled in the Pennyrile Region. The Recruitment and Certification workers are responsible for recruiting foster/adoptive families statewide. They also provide support to the certified foster/adoptive families; help the intake and ongoing teams place children that come into the State's care and assist in the adoption process.
- Kentucky's, Secretary of the Cabinet For Families and Children Viola Miller, has made it her personal goal and agenda to make sure that our foster/adoptive parents and foster children are getting satisfactory services in order to promote healthy and safe environments for Kentucky's children. The Cabinet is using research, training and alternate services to enhance the quality of services being providing to our foster/adoptive families and children. Some of the trainings and services that have been implemented in the past several months are the Kentucky Foster Care Census, Family First Hotline, Foster Parent Quarterly Meetings, Foster Parent Network, Internal Validation of Records and in the near future we will be conducting CQI meeting with foster families.

# Quantitative Research Question

- Are the newly implemented trainings and services helping to increase foster/adoptive parent satisfaction with the Cabinet for Families and Children?



# PUROSE OF THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

- Determine if the newly implemented services are helping in increasing the foster and/or adoptive parents satisfaction with the agency.

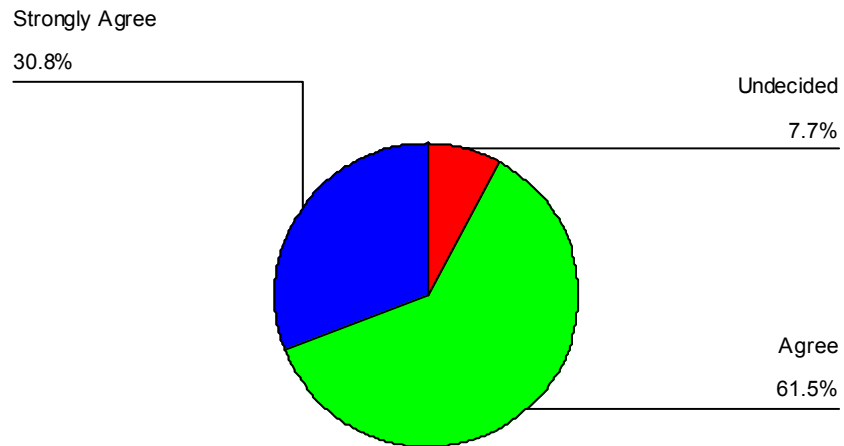


# METHODS

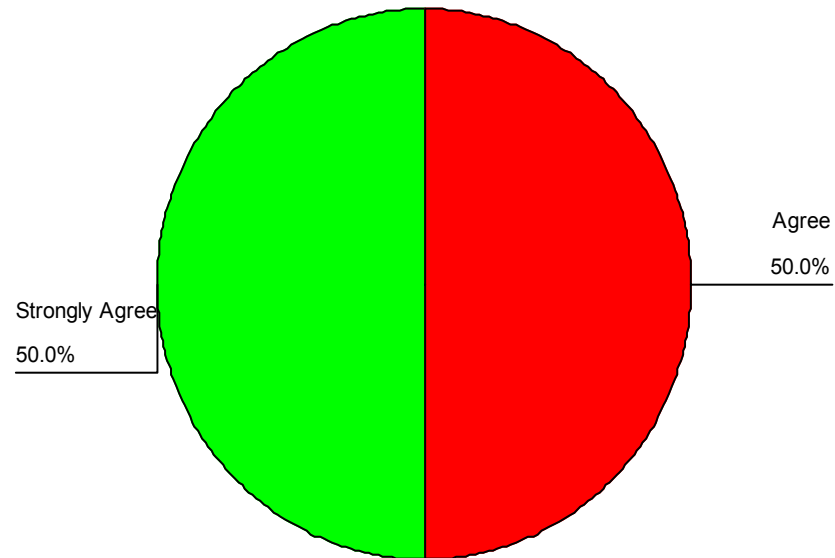
- The mailing list for the active foster and/or adoptive parents were provided by the Pennyrile Region R&C team. All of the families were included in the survey. There were 75 foster/adoptive parents.
- The foster/adoptive parents were invited to participate in the study. Along with the survey I sent a transmittal form that waived the consent form. The transmittal letter instructed the foster/adoptive parents to complete the survey and return it to the researcher in the self addressed and stamped envelope if they agreed to take part in the study.
- Twenty-six out of seventy five foster parents responded to the survey. Twenty-two of the respondents reported having a child placed in their home during the past six months, four had not had a child placed in their home within the last six months and forty-nine foster parents didn't participate in the study.

## GRAPHS

The agency values my work  
with families and children

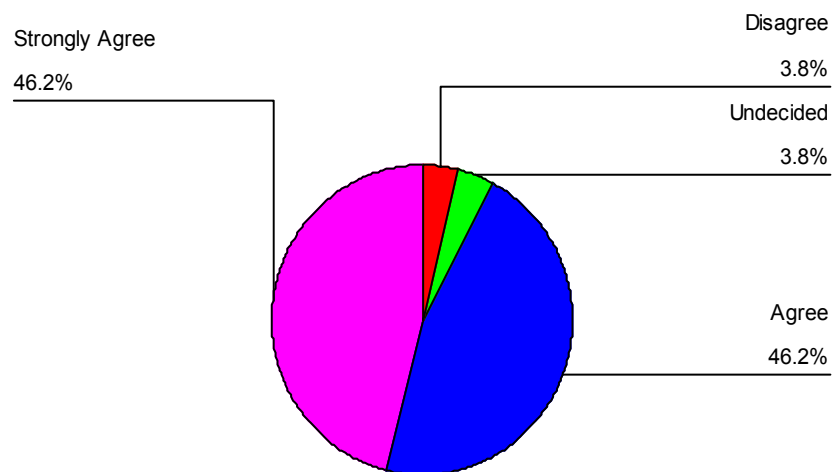


I contribute to the stability and safety of  
the individuals and families with whom I work

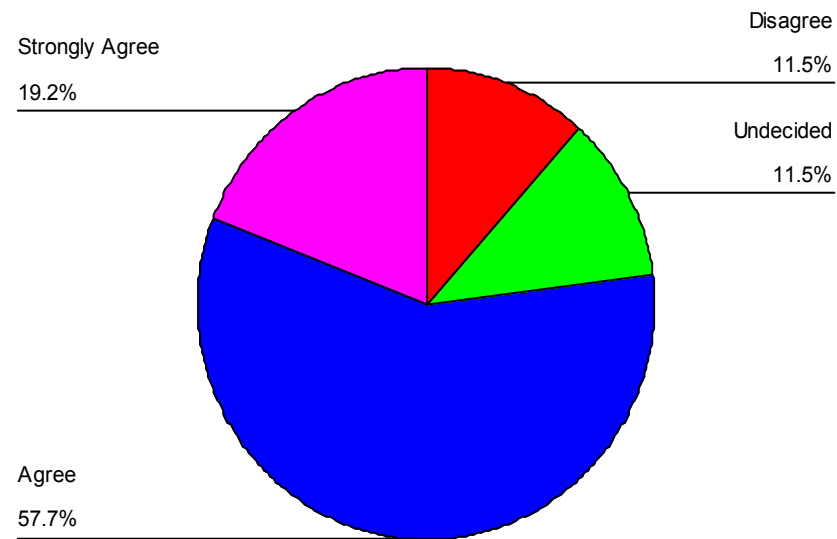




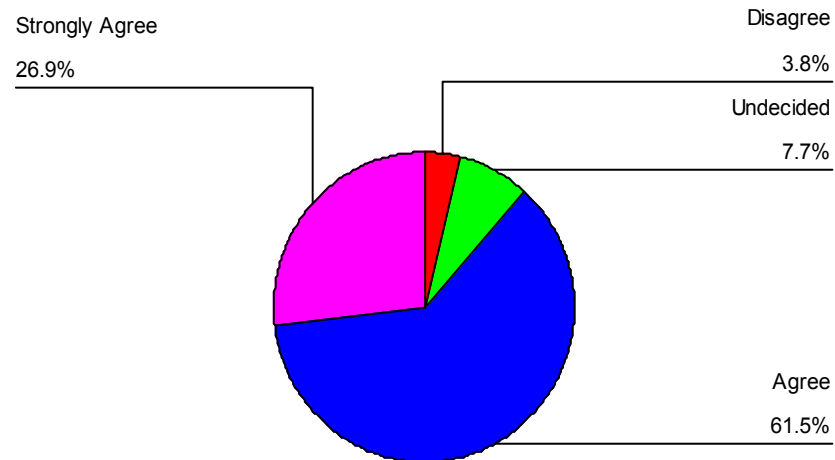
My R&C worker assist me in my work with  
foster children



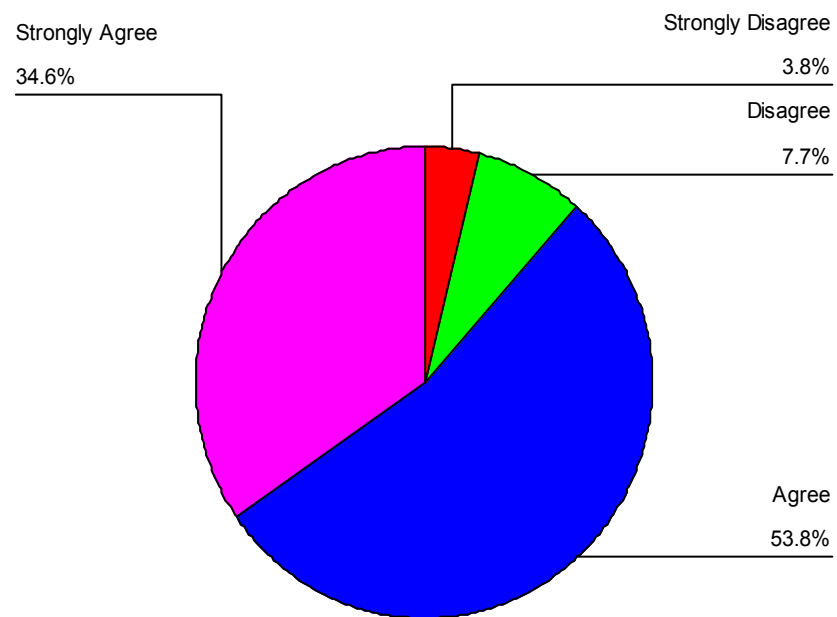
## I receive information in a timely manner



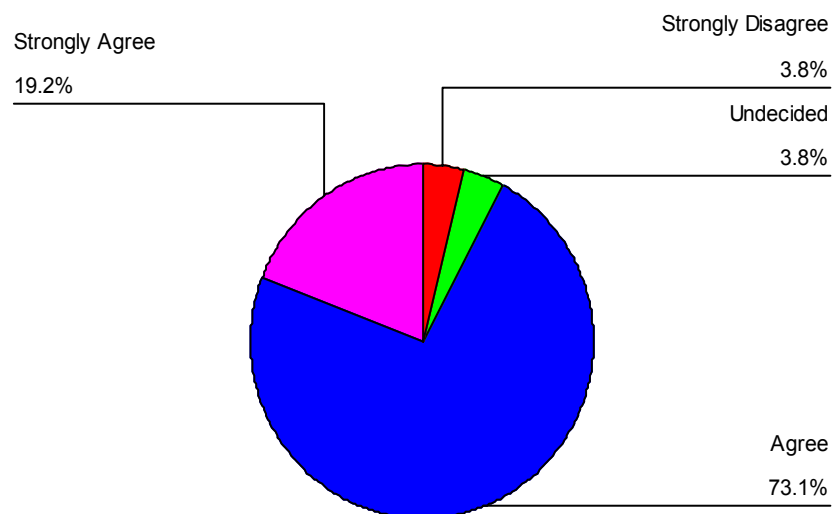
I am provided with the resources  
to care for foster children



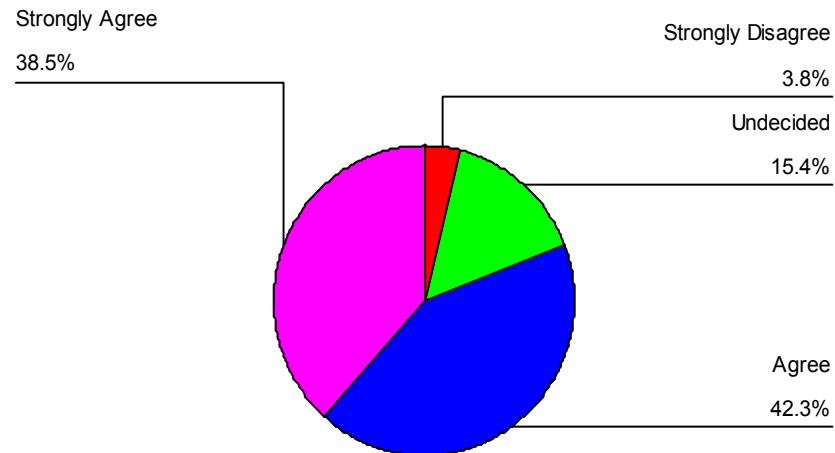
## Reimbursement is timely



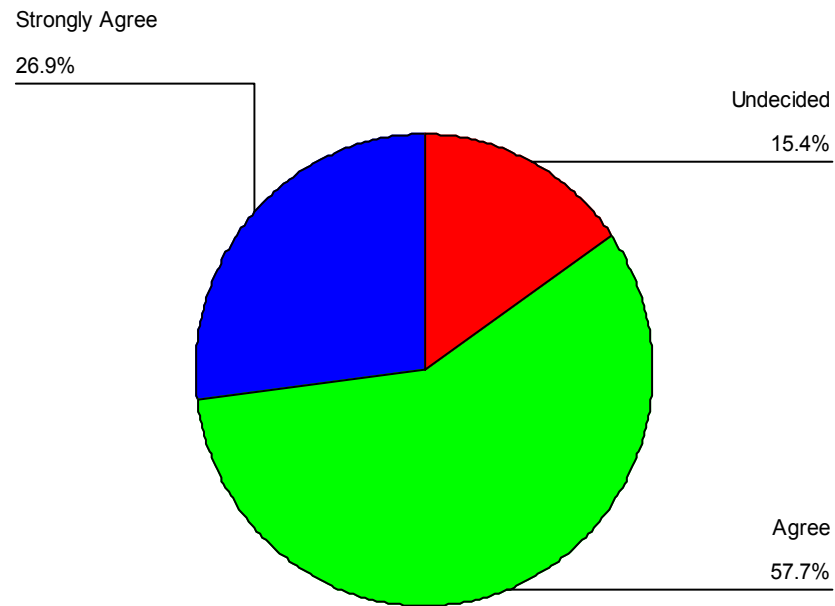
## My calls are returned in a timely manner



I would recommend other people  
to become a foster or adoptive family



## It is easy to make an appointment with the staff



# Results

- The satisfaction level of the foster and/or adoptive parents appear to be increasing with the exception of receiving timely information and recommending other people to become foster or adoptive families. The satisfaction level of receiving timely information has gone down .9% since September 2002 and the percentage of foster/adoptive parent's willing to recommend other people to become foster or adoptive families has gone down .7% since September 2002.
- A Total Satisfaction Score was calculated by adding the responses from all 12 questions. The range of possible score is between 12 and 60 points. The average total satisfaction rating was 49.8 of these 60 points. One way to consider that 49.8 is 83% of the total possible score of 60 points.
- In conclusion, 83% of the foster/adoptive parents that responded to the survey are satisfied with their relationship with the Cabinet for Families and Children compared to the 81.1% in last years survey.



# Limitations of Quantitative Study

- Limited time frame to obtain data (due to late approval date for the study).
- Limited responses obtained from the foster/adoptive parents in the Pennyrile Region.
- Last year there were 81 active foster/adoptive parents and this year there are 75 active foster/adoptive parents.

# Purpose of Qualitative Research

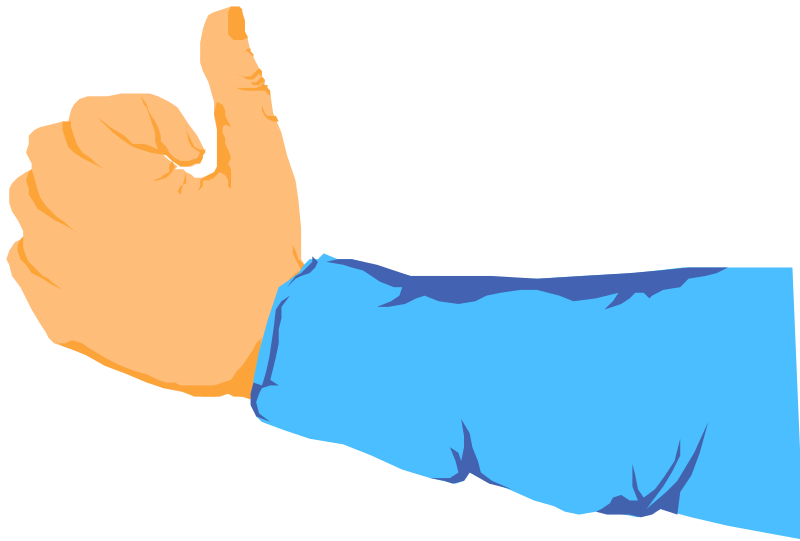
- The purpose of the qualitative research was to obtain comments and suggestions from the foster/adoptive parents in order to gather themes in the quest to provide satisfactory services to their families.



# Method for Qualitative Research

- My qualitative research came from the additional comments and suggestions area located at the end of the survey that was sent out. Four foster/adoptive parents included written comments were coded as either positive, neutral suggestions and/or comments or negative. However, there were no negative comments made.

# Themes in Qualitative Research



- Foster/Adoptive parents provided neutral suggestions and/or comments.
- There were no negative suggestions and/or comments noted.
- The written comments were made by the respondents that have had children placed in their home within the last six months.

# Limitations in Qualitative Research

- Limited responses to the survey in the Pennyrile Region.
- Limited responses to the comment and suggestion area.
- Limited time frame to gather data (due to the late approval date for the study).

# Overall Conclusion

- Overall, foster/adoptive parent's satisfaction with their partnership with the Cabinet for Families and Children has increased since newly implemented trainings and services have been offered. The overall total satisfaction score from last year has increased from 81.1% to 83%. The level of satisfaction regarding each survey question has increased with the exception of receiving information in a timely manner and the foster/adoptive parent's willingness to recommend others to become foster/adoptive parents.

