

**REPORT OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES ON**

**Training, Supportive
Services and Recruitment
for Foster Families: A
Feasibility Study**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 14

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

December 13, 1991

**TO: The Honorable Lawrence Douglas Wilder
Governor of Virginia**

and

The General Assembly of Virginia

The 1991 General Assembly, through Senate Joint Resolution Number 259, requested the Department of Social Services to "study the feasibility of mandating foster parent training in the Commonwealth, developing a statewide policy regarding supportive services such as respite care, day care and the availability of caseworkers for foster parents, and developing a statewide model for foster parent recruiting." The study was to address, but not be limited to: the fiscal and programmatic impact of mandating pre-service and in-service training for foster parents and of implementing a statewide policy regarding supportive services; the most effective and efficient methods of providing such statewide training, including curricula development and training delivery, as well as supportive services and for recruitment of foster parents; and identification of resources and time frames necessary to implement these programs.

Enclosed for your review and consideration is the report that has been prepared in response to this request. The department shared their comments on the report with the Youth Services Commission and the Services Committee of the Virginia League of Social Service Executives and was pleased to receive their comments.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. D. Jackson".

**Larry D. Jackson
Commissioner**

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TRAINING, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES AND RECRUITMENT FOR FOSTER FAMILIES



"Many families have not been prepared to handle the complex needs of the children coming into foster care."

A FEASIBILITY STUDY

Prepared By:

Virginia Department of Social Services

**Division of Service Programs
Adoption, Foster Care and Training Units**

November 1991

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Foster parents of Virginia's children need to be well-prepared to meet the multiple needs of the children entering the foster care system."

This was the conclusion of state lawmakers after a comprehensive study of the status of the foster care system in the Commonwealth. As a result, the 1991 General Assembly requested, through House Joint Resolution 259, that the Department of Social Services study the feasibility of mandating foster parent training in the Commonwealth; developing a statewide policy regarding supportive services such as respite care, day care and the availability of caseworkers for foster parents; and developing a statewide model for foster parent recruiting.

In response to the charge, the department established and led a study committee. The committee reviewed foster care materials and reports prepared by and made available to the department and surveyed local social service agencies, department central and regional staff, several private child placing agencies, foster parent organizations and child welfare staff from neighboring states.

The study focused on three components of the foster care system: **training, supportive services, and recruitment of foster parents providing foster family care.** Issues and recommendations focused on the direction the department should take regarding each component. In addition, the report includes an analysis of the feasibility of options for each of the system's components.

Foster care is substitute care on a 24-hour basis for children whose families are in crises. Care is provided for children in family homes, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, treatment centers, correctional facilities, and other types of living arrangements. It is intended to be a temporary response to family problems rather than a long term solution.

When a child enters foster care, efforts are made to place the child in the least restrictive placement: the most family-like setting available. This is usually a foster family home. Foster parents are crucial to the success of the foster care system as most of the children in care reside in foster homes.

Based on department statistics, 6,304 children were in foster care in Virginia on June 30, 1991, with 4,572 (73%) residing in foster family homes within their own communities. While the average age of a child in foster care is 10.5 years,

almost half (41%) are between the ages of 13 and 21. The average time a foster child has been in care is 3.1 years.

The needs of children in foster care have become more complex and challenging. Youngsters have been traumatized by poverty and homelessness, emotional maltreatment, physical and sexual abuse, alcohol and other drug exposure, and HIV (AIDS) infection. Foster children and birth families now require more specialized and intensive services than children in foster care ten years ago.

The department's data base lists 4,100 families approved by local social service agencies to provide foster family care. While the number of approved homes is considerable, foster care supervisors throughout the state consistently cite a lack of foster homes. The department's 1989 study, **Strategies for Recruitment and Retention of Foster Care Families in Virginia**, explains the need for more homes:

- o Many families have not been trained or prepared to handle the complex needs of the children coming into or already in care;
- o Some available homes do not match the needs of children in care;
- o Some approved homes have only a limited capacity to care for a narrow range of children;
- o Some approved foster families have overestimated their capacity to care for a larger number of children; and
- o Some families need a rest from the difficulties of foster parenting.

In the department's **Foster Care Study**, conducted in 1985, the number one reason given by foster parents for leaving the system was that the needs of the foster child were greater than expected. Many had not been trained to meet the needs children presented. A lack of adequately trained foster parents and a shortage of homes are causing more restrictive placements. Consequently, children may be placed in costly residential facilities or other arrangements instead of foster homes.

To help foster families fulfill their roles and to increase the number of family homes, the department and local agencies must:

- o Train foster families to respond to the multiple and complex needs of children in care;

- o Support foster families with services which enable them to continue foster parenting; and
- o Recruit sufficient numbers of foster families.

This represents a challenge to the current foster care system. Currently, training, provision of supportive services, and recruitment vary from agency to agency, and differ in availability, quality, and delivery methods.

Each of the components with appropriate recommendations is highlighted below, beginning with training, followed by supportive services and then recruitment. This order reflects the department's priority for implementation of the recommendations, considering need and the revenue shortage currently faced by the state. The report discusses the bases for the recommendations and strategies for implementation.

TRAINING

Foster parent training includes the education and skill development necessary to ensure foster parents have knowledge, skills and abilities required to complete the tasks of family foster care. At this time, the choice of requiring training for foster parents is a decision of local agencies.

Foster parent training is generally divided into two types: pre-service and in-service. Pre-service occurs before the placement of a child in the foster family home, while in-service training occurs after the placement of a child.

A great number of foster parents with little or no training are providing services for children with complex needs. Of the 124 local social service agencies, 72 agencies representing 3,205 (78%) of approved foster homes, now provide varying levels of pre-service training, although foster parents approved before 1990, generally, have not received training. Some in-service training is currently provided by 55 local agencies. Both pre-service and in-service training are provided by 42 agencies. Foster parents repeatedly express the need for training to enable them to deal with the problems of children in their homes.

In making provisions for removal of children from families, the state has a responsibility to guarantee that the welfare and interests of all children are equitably supported. With mandated foster parent pre-service and in-service training, all foster parents would receive consistent information and skill

development. The needs of foster children would be better met.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Local social service agencies should be mandated to assure the provision of foster parent training, based on the potential foster parent's training needs, and foster parents should be mandated to attend.

Upon full implementation of the proposed foster parent training program, Section 63.1-56 of the Code of Virginia should be amended to require that: all foster parents demonstrate specific competencies; local social service agencies assess the foster parents' skills and competencies; and local social service agencies provide for skills and policy training, as needed, prior to placement of a child in the home, and prescribed in-service training as a condition of re-approval as a foster home.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The department should secure funds to provide reimbursement to foster parents for costs of attending mandated pre-service and in-service training, to include ancillary costs such as mileage and day care expenses.

RECOMMENDATION 3: To ensure that foster families have needed competencies, the department should develop, in collaboration with local agencies, a standardized assessment process and instrument. The local agency should use the assessment instrument to determine the foster parent's level of competency in specific categories, and to identify areas for further skill development necessary to meet the needs of children placed in the home.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The department should implement a statewide program of policy and competency-based skills training for foster parents, including centralized development functions and decentralized delivery.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The department should expand its current training structure with Virginia Institute of Social Service Training Activities (VISSTA) to include foster parent training.

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Supportive services enable foster parents to meet the needs of foster children in family-based care. The department and local agencies currently provide many supportive services to foster families. The study focused on policy, as well as respite care, day care, caseworker availability and support to foster children

and parents as the limited time frame for the study did not permit examination of other services.

Policy: State policy and federal regulations lack specificity in regard to supportive services such as respite and day care for foster families or foster children. The lack of clear, directive policy and insufficient funding for supportive services are barriers to consistent, statewide availability of supportive services.

Respite Care: Foster parents often need respite care to continue foster parenting. Respite care provides a temporary break in the care of children who are very demanding. The normal resources families use to take breaks in the care of children, such as family, neighbors, or friends, are often unwilling or ill equipped to provide temporary care for foster children. Respite care is currently being piloted in Virginia. Many localities are identifying respite care as a necessary service for children in therapeutic foster care to relieve foster parents of the heavy demands of these children.

Day Care: The increasing need for day care is due to more parents working outside of the home. In the past, many local social service agencies did not pay for day care; therefore, agencies have recruited foster parents who did not need day care. Agencies lose current and potential foster parents when they do not pay for day care for foster children in situations where foster parents need to work.

Caseworker Availability: Lack of availability means that caseworkers are unable to respond in a timely manner when foster parents or children need their assistance. Agencies report that work required in a foster care caseload is much more involved, time consuming, and subject to documentation requirements than in other service areas. They also report that time spent on extensive documentation detracts from direct contact with foster parents, foster children and biological family members.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The department should develop policy regarding supportive services for foster families and children. This policy must preserve families and promote statewide consistency of services for foster children. It must offer flexibility to local agencies and communities for the use of the most appropriate resources available. These services should be provided to support family-based placements and prevent more restrictive out-of-home placements.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The department should expand respite care services statewide, initially targeting localities with high foster care caseloads, a lack of community support for foster parents, a significant incidence of

children with special needs, or an inadequate number of foster homes.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The department should explore alternative sources of funding day care services for foster children and seek funding from the General Assembly to pilot the provision of day care.

RECOMMENDATION 9: The department should work toward decreasing the workloads of caseworkers by automating foster care records to reduce time required for paperwork.

RECOMMENDATION 10: The department should continue to monitor local caseloads through caseload standards and random moment sampling, and establish goals for foster care caseloads which consider all work needed with foster parent coordination.

RECOMMENDATION 11: The department should continue supporting training activities for caseworkers and supervisors to ensure that they have the basic skills to perform their job duties.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The department should facilitate the development of a foster parent consultation function at the local level.

RECRUITMENT

Local social service agencies handle their own foster parent recruitment. However, staff face a difficult task identifying adults who are interested and qualified to be foster parents. With more single parent households, more women working outside the home, and higher costs of raising a child, fewer families are able to volunteer as a foster family home. In addition, local agencies also have less time for recruitment because of greater caseload responsibilities and demands.

In the 1985 **Foster Care Study**, 91% of the local agencies surveyed said they would like the state to take an active role in recruitment. In a June 1991 telephone survey of local agencies, 119 agencies (96%) indicated a continued desire for the state to take a leadership and collaborative role in foster parent recruitment.

RECOMMENDATION 13: For an initial foster parent recruitment program, the department should establish a system that provides for centralized administrative support from the department, and decentralized provision of services from local social service agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 14: To ensure an effective recruitment program in the state, the department should assume a leadership role in assisting local agencies recruit for foster parents.

RECOMMENDATION 15: The department should assure development of high quality brochures, flyers, posters, handbooks, and other prepared materials and disseminate them to local social service agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 16: The department should analyze current utilization of approved foster family homes, review the parent assessment and approval process, and assess the foster families' role with the agencies and relationship to caseworkers with respect to the provision of foster care.

RECOMMENDATION 17: The department should hire one full time, permanent staff person to provide overall direction for foster care recruitment and implement the recruitment strategies.

FEASIBILITY OPTIONS

A comprehensive program including pre-service and in-service training, a full range of supportive services, and recruitment would strengthen the foster care program and care provided through foster homes.

Because the department anticipates limited funding and has concerns about effectively initiating all of the recommendations of this report immediately, a phased-in program is proposed. A phased-in program would build a comprehensive program over three biennia. Phase 1 would cover FY 93 and FY 94, and include:

Training

- o Assessment of training needs of foster parents;
- o Development and testing of curricula for pre-service and in-service training;
- o Certification of trainers;
- o Delivery of basic pre-service training to all new foster parents and other identified foster parents; and

- o Development, testing and implementation of an automated system to track and monitor foster parent training.
- o Cost in general funds would be \$488,374 per year.

Supportive Services

- o Expanded piloting of respite care through either use of pooled funds or selected localities, with continuation of \$180,200 general funds and an additional \$99,800 in new general funds;
- o Investigating federal funds for day care during FY 93 and piloting day care beginning in FY 94, using general funds (\$234,000) for 100 children if no federal funds are available; and
- o Further development and testing of an automated personal computer package for local foster care workers, using 50% of the funds of an approved federal grant (\$50,000 FY 93 and \$12,500 FY 94).

Recruitment

- o No funding

The department would need to design an evaluation to determine impacts of initiatives in training and supportive services on the foster care program.

Phase 2, covering a span of two years, FY 95 and 96, would build on phase 1 and add:

- o Delivery of in-service training to foster parents assessed as needing training;
- o Expanded piloting of respite care and child day care services to additional localities and children;
- o Training for workers statewide to use the automated package, including costs for trainer, travel, and materials; and
- o Increased availability of caseworkers for foster parent consultation.

Phase 3, covering two years, FY 97 and FY 98, would allow further implementation of the comprehensive program, with the inclusion of:

- o Modifications, if appropriate, to training curricula, delivery, and tracking;
- o Implementation of the recruitment model; and
- o Further expansion of supportive services based on the assessment of the impacts of expanded training and supportive services on the foster care system.

RECOMMENDATION 18: The department should use the phased-in approach as presented in Option 2 of the report, as it permits funding needs to be spread over a period of time, allows for evaluation of progress along the way, and addresses the needs identified to strengthen the foster care program.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared by the Division of Service Programs; Foster Care, Adoption, and Training Units with the aid of a study group. Individual members are listed in Appendix A. Technical assistance was provided by the Division of Planning and Program Review.

The study group consisted of representatives from the Virginia Foster Care Association, local social service agencies, private child placing agencies, Virginia Department of Social Services, Virginia Emergency Families for Children, the Foster and Adoptive Care Training System (FACTS), and Virginia Institute for Social Services Training Activities (VISSTA).

The Foster Care, Adoption, and Training Units acknowledge and appreciate the extensive effort of the study group. The work accomplished by reviewing and analyzing reports, and by conducting interviews and surveys, has enabled staff to complete this report.

I. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The 1991 General Assembly requested through House Joint Resolution 259 that "the Department of Social Services study the feasibility of (i) mandating foster parent training in the Commonwealth, (ii) developing a statewide policy regarding supportive services such as respite care, day care and the availability of caseworkers for foster parents, and (iii) developing a statewide model for foster parent recruiting.

House Joint Resolution 259 (see Appendix B) is the result of 1990 General Assembly Senate Joint Resolution No. 73. This resolution created a joint subcommittee that conducted a comprehensive study of the status of the foster care system in the Commonwealth. The joint subcommittee heard testimony from foster parents, foster children, child advocates, the Department of Social Services, local social service agencies, private providers of foster care, and other concerned persons. The joint subcommittee stated that foster parents of Virginia's children need to be well-prepared to meet the multiple needs of children entering the foster care system.

In response to the study charge, this report provides background information on the current system, highlights needs, and describes a model system of supports for foster parents providing family-based care for children. This system includes components for training, supportive services, and recruitment. Issues of the foster care support system are analyzed, and recommendations are made about the direction the Department of Social Services should take to assure adequate services for foster families and thereby the children in their care.

BACKGROUND

Foster care is substitute care on a 24-hour basis for children whose families are in crises. Care is provided for children in family homes, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, treatment centers, correctional facilities, and other types of living arrangements. It is intended to be a temporary response to family problems rather than a long term solution.

The philosophy of the child welfare system is to maintain family unity and keep children in their own homes. The first objective is to provide services to prevent a child from being removed from his own home. When parents are unable or unwilling to change the condition(s) in their home, placement of the child in foster care may be necessary. The objective then becomes the provision of further services to the family so that the child may return home. If this is not possible, the objective becomes finding another permanent home for the child.

When a child enters foster care, efforts are made to place the child in the least restrictive placement: the most family-like setting available. This is usually a foster family home. If possible, the child is placed in close proximity to the parents' home, so that familial relationships can be continued.

Every child in the custody of local social service agencies must have a permanency planning goal. These goals are established by law and ranked in order of priority:

- o Return to parents/prior custodians;
- o Placement with relatives;
- o Adoption;
- o Permanent foster care; or
- o Continued foster care.

Foster parents are crucial to the success of the foster family care program as most of the children in care reside in foster homes. According to the National Commission on Family Foster Care, family foster care must perform the following essential tasks:

- o "Protect and nurture children in a safe, predictable environment;
- o Ameliorate developmental delays and meet developmental needs for children;
- o Promote positive self-esteem, family relationships, and cultural and ethnic identity;
- o Plan and achieve permanence; and
- o Prepare children and their parents for safe and appropriate relationships and responsibilities" (Blueprint, 1991).

Following is a profile of both children in foster care and the foster parents

providing care, and discussion of their needs.

Virginia's Foster Children Today

Department statistics indicate that 6,304 children were in foster care on June 30, 1991, with 4,572 (73%) residing in foster family homes within their own communities. While the average age of a child in foster care is 10.5 years, almost half (41%) are between the ages of 13 and 21. The average time a foster child has been in care is 3.1 years. Only ten percent of the children in care are placed in private, residential facilities. The most common long-term permanency plan for foster children is to return home (52%), followed by adoption (20%), and continued foster care (13%).

Typically, the child who *entered* care in fiscal year 1991 was younger than in previous years. Twenty-eight percent were under the age of three years, 13.7% were between three and six, 33% were between seven and fourteen, and 25.3% were fourteen and older. Over 47% of the children were Black. The majority entered because of abuse/neglect (59%) or because parents signed an entrustment agreement (19%). A majority had the goal to return home. Since 1988, there has been a 7% increase in the number of children entering foster care. Additional demographic information on children in care is included in Appendix C.

The needs of children in foster care have become more complex and challenging. Youngsters have been traumatized by poverty and homelessness, emotional maltreatment, physical and sexual abuse, alcohol and other drug exposure, and HIV (AIDS) infection (Blueprint, 1991). Foster children and birth families now require more specialized and intensive services than children in foster care ten years ago. The department's study, **Report of Task Force on The Status of Older Children in Foster Care**, 1986, substantiates this information.

Foster Parents Today

The Virginia Client Information System (VACIS) lists 4,100 families approved by local social service agencies to provide foster family care. Most foster parents (70%) are married. The racial composition of foster families is 41% Black, 58% White and 1% Other. The average age range is 25 to 45 years old, and 40% of foster families have a formal education beyond high school. Almost 80% of the families provide regular foster care for one or more children.

While the number of approved homes may appear to be sufficient, foster care supervisors throughout the state consistently cite a lack of foster homes. The

department's 1989 study, **Strategies for Recruitment and Retention of Foster Care Families in Virginia**, explains the need for more homes:

- o Many families have not been trained or prepared to handle the complex needs of children coming into or already in care;
- o Some available homes do not match the needs of children in care;
- o Some approved homes have only a limited capacity to care for a narrow range of children;
- o Some approved foster families have overestimated their capacity to care for a larger number of children; and,
- o Some families need a rest from the difficulties of foster parenting.

In the department's **Foster Care Study**, conducted in 1985, the number one reason given by foster parents for leaving the system was the needs of the foster child were greater than expected. Many had not been trained to meet the needs children presented.

In addition, in recent years, the foster care system has realized the merits of forming a service team made up of the biological parent(s), the foster parent(s), and the foster care worker. In this service approach, foster parents serve as mentors and role models for birth parents. This essential but added responsibility puts additional stress on foster families.

To help foster families fulfill their roles and to increase the number of family homes, the department and local agencies must:

- o Train foster families to respond to the multiple and complex needs of children in care;
- o Support foster families with services which enable them to continue foster parenting; and
- o Recruit sufficient numbers of foster families.

This represents a challenge to the current foster care system. Currently, training, provision of supportive services and recruitment vary from agency to agency, and differ in availability, quality, and delivery methods.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The study focused on ways to better prepare foster parents to meet the needs of children who must rely on substitute family care. For each of the components, **training, supportive services, and recruitment**, study objectives were to:

- o Document current efforts by local and state departments;
- o Develop feasible alternatives; and
- o Evaluate viable options for implementing the selected alternative.

METHODOLOGY

To study the feasibility of mandating foster parent training, developing policy regarding supportive services, and developing a model for foster parent recruitment, the department established and led a committee composed of local social service agency staff, department staff, foster parents and private child placing agency representatives.

The committee was divided into three groups: training, supportive services, and recruitment. Each group reviewed foster care materials and reports prepared by and/or made available to the department. (See Bibliography.) The groups surveyed and interviewed staff and volunteers with local social service agencies, department central and regional offices, several private child placing agencies, foster parent organizations, child advocate groups and child welfare staff from neighboring states. (See Appendix D, References.)

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

The remaining chapters of this report discuss each of the components beginning with training, Chapter II; followed by supportive services, Chapter III; and then recruitment, Chapter IV. This order reflects the department's priority for implementation of the recommendations, considering need and the revenue shortage currently faced by the state. Together the chapters recommend a model of family foster care supports. Chapter V discusses the options and associated costs for statewide implementation of the model.

II. TRAINING

OVERVIEW

Foster parent training includes the education and skill development necessary to ensure foster parents have knowledge, skills and abilities required to complete the tasks of family foster care. Research has documented why it is valuable and necessary to train foster parents:

- o Children in foster care spend more time with foster parents than with any other representatives of the child welfare system.
- o Pre-service training reduces placement disruption, the length of time children are in care, and foster parent turnover.
- o Trained foster parents are better prepared to deal with "acting out" behaviors, and accept more children with difficult problems.
- o Foster parents and caseworkers need training on how to work together as a team on permanency planning.
- o Well-trained foster families provide placements which are family-focused and community-based. With specialized training, foster homes become less restrictive alternatives to inappropriate, high-cost residential placements for youth who can function in the community.
- o Lack of training for foster parents is correlated with incidents of abuse in foster care.
- o The role of foster parents has changed in the past decade from providing food, clothing and shelter, to participating as a member of a professional team making decisions and providing services to children and families. As part of a team, the foster family assists in implementing permanency planning for children in foster care.
- o A good preparation/mutual selection program is the strongest link between recruitment and retention of foster parents.

TRAINING COMPONENTS: PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE

Foster parent training is generally divided into two types: pre-service and in-service. Pre-service training occurs before the placement of a child in the foster family home, while in-service training occurs after the placement of a child.

Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training addresses the information, knowledge and skill development necessary for foster parents to begin providing services to children. An important component of pre-service training is a mutual selection process where foster parents make an informed decision about whether fostering is right for their family, and the trainer evaluates the foster family's skills for fostering. Accurate information about the various needs of children in care, and an assessment of the foster parent's ability to work as part of a team are critical to this decision making.

Families who have realistic expectations are far more likely to continue working with a troubled child rather than ask for the child's removal. They are also more likely to remain in the foster care system as foster parents.

In-Service Training

In-service training is ongoing education and skill development received after approval as a foster home and placement of a child in the home. In-service training addresses additional competencies and specialized knowledge needed to meet the increasing levels of difficulty of children's needs. Some specialized areas of in-service training include how to deal with: HIV and substance exposed infants; substance abuse; sexual abuse; discipline issues and methods; and independent living skills for adolescents.

CURRENT TRAINING EFFORTS

Foster parent training in Virginia is optional. While a growing number of agencies identify pre-service and in-service training as a priority, others still identify training as a luxury.

The department's regulations related to foster home approval state, "The provider shall attend any orientation and training required by the agency." Policy further

states that the agency should provide some basic orientation to any approved provider, and may provide any training it feels necessary. Thus, the choice of requiring training for foster parents is a decision of local agencies. Barriers to participation are lack of incentives for foster parents to attend training, and lack of resources (staff positions to recruit, assess, train and support a pool of qualified foster homes).

- o Pre-service training is currently provided by 72 of the 124 local agencies. This training varies from one-on-one or self-instructional to structured 10-week group programs.

Of the 72 agencies, 40 "mandate" pre-service training for foster parents. Even in these agencies, training may not always be delivered to both foster parents or before a child is placed in the home.

- o In-service training is currently provided by 55 of the 124 local agencies.

Of the 55 agencies, 12 mandate in-service training for foster families. The remaining 43 agencies provide random, optional in-service training when funds, time, and need are all simultaneously present.

- o Both in-service training and pre-service training are currently provided by 42 of the 124 local agencies.

The 72 agencies now providing pre-service training represent 3,205 (78%) of approved foster homes. The majority of the agencies have instituted this pre-service training since January 1990. The new foster parents approved in these agencies since that time have had the advantage of the varying levels of pre-service training offered through those agencies; however, parents approved before 1990, generally, have not had training.

Of the 12 agencies mandating in-service training, four have mandated it since January 1991. The remaining 8 agencies report that all their foster parents have received some training. These 8 agencies represent 1,041 foster homes providing care for less than 2,000 children.

Following is a discussion of training efforts currently being offered in Virginia, local initiatives, regional and multi-agency projects, and state-supported training.

Local Social Service Agencies' Efforts

Training is managed in different ways in local agencies. In addition to a variety of curricula and methods of delivery, agencies handle the staffing differently. In most instances, the trainers are foster care workers providing client services, rather than certified trainers or co-training teams made up of workers and trainers.

A few agencies allocate local funds to hire a foster care worker to recruit, assess, train and provide ongoing support to foster parents. Agencies in more urban, densely populated areas, such as Richmond City and Virginia Beach, hire a unit of foster parent trainers with local funding. Other agencies, such as Hampton and Loudoun, fund individual staff positions to support these functions. These positions range from part to full-time at an annual cost of \$15,000 to \$45,000 each.

These specialized positions have the potential to develop an ongoing team relationship with foster parents and the agency. These foster care workers recruit prospective foster parents; provide pre-service training and assessment of foster family skills; complete home studies for the agency; match children to families; provide a variety of supportive services to retain foster families; and conduct or provide access to in-service training.

Regional, Multi-Agency Efforts

In some instances, several agencies have combined local funding resources to hire a foster care worker to recruit, train, assess, and provide support to foster parents on a regional basis. The purpose of these projects is to create a pool of trained foster homes to be shared by sponsoring agencies.

There are two special projects of this nature operating in the state: Tri-Area Foster Families in Charlottesville, and Rappahannock Area Foster Families Team in Spotsylvania. Initially, these projects were partially funded by the department. For FY 1991-92, the department used federal Title IV-E funds matched by 25 percent local funds.

State Efforts

The department uses a consultative approach to help local agencies develop foster parent training through Foster/Adoptive Care Training System (FACTS). FACTS is a component of the training unit within the department's Division of Service Programs. This training component is administered by a part-time training

coordinator in the department's central office. Foster parents are encouraged to become involved in the FACTS training as co-trainers with agency staff. Through this program, five regional training coordinators assist local agencies and foster parents to develop individual training programs. Local participation is voluntary. Services provided are:

- o Assessment of training program needs;
- o Training of trainers;
- o Training design, development and review;
- o Resource location and development; and
- o Some direct in-service training of foster parents.

With assistance from FACTS, agencies providing pre-service training has increased 61 % since 1987. However, the current voluntary system is not providing training to all foster parents who need this support and training curricula vary.

TRAINING NEED

In making provisions for removal of children from families, the state has a responsibility to guarantee that the welfare and interests of all children are equitably supported. Foster parents repeatedly express the need for training to enable them to deal with the problems of children in their homes. New foster parents need immediate orientation and training on the issues surrounding foster care: foster care policy and procedures, legal responsibilities and requirements, roles of the foster parent and social worker within a team model, and how to work with the approving agency.

Training is also needed on how to effectively deal with the complex developmental needs of children who have been traumatized by poverty and homelessness, emotional maltreatment, physical and sexual abuse, alcohol and other drug exposure, and HIV (AIDS) infection.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives to meet training needs for foster parents are: the current voluntary/optional training; mandatory training; and combinations of the two, such as mandatory pre-service and optional in-service training, or optional pre-service

and mandatory in-service training.

Voluntary training is the least desirable option because it does not adequately assure the most competent service provision for children. With mandated foster parent pre-service and in-service training, all foster parents would receive consistent information and skill development. The needs of foster children would be better met.

Twenty-two states now mandate foster parent pre-service training, many requiring foster parent training under orders from their state supreme courts or federal district courts. The orders were necessary because of damages to children who were not receiving proper attention and care in their foster homes. When custody of a child is assumed by a local social service agency, significant liability exists if the child is not cared for adequately.

In a recent survey of Virginia foster parents in two department regions, 92% of those responding want to see mandated training for foster parents. Mandated training would more consistently ensure that foster parents have the skills to handle the emotional, behavioral and physical demands of children in foster care. If more foster parents had additional specialized and therapeutic training, some of the 1,732 children in placements other than family homes could live in a less restrictive, less costly, and more family-focused setting as well.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Local social service agencies should be mandated to assure the provision of foster parent training, based on the potential foster parent's training needs, and foster parents should be mandated to attend.

Upon full implementation of the proposed foster parent training program, Section 63.1-56 of the Code of Virginia should be amended to require that: all foster parents demonstrate specific competencies; local social service agencies assess the foster parents' skills and competencies; and local social service agencies provide for skills and policy training, as needed, prior to placement of a child in the home, and prescribed in-service training as a condition of re-approval as a foster home.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The department should secure funds to provide reimbursement to foster parents for costs of attending mandated pre-service and in-service training, to include ancillary costs such as mileage and day care expenses.

DESIGN OF A TRAINING MODEL: COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING

If local agencies are required to assure training, the best approach is a statewide centralized curriculum and trainer unit to assure quality and consistency, and a decentralized delivery structure to increase foster parent responsiveness and improve accessibility. A model training system would include:

- o Individualized Assessment of Training Needs;
- o Centralized Development; and
- o Decentralized Delivery.

Individualized Assessment of Training Needs

Foster parents need a certain level of skills to meet the increasingly complex needs of children entering foster care. To determine that foster parents have the skills to meet these needs, an assessment process and instrument must be developed that will identify the various levels of need for children and then to define the competencies necessary to meet those needs.

The levels of difficulty in meeting multiple and complex needs of children have historically been described as regular family, specialized, and therapeutic foster care. The exact definitions vary from state-to-state and agency-to-agency, and involve differing levels of difficulty, i.e., mildly to severely physically handicapped and/or emotionally disturbed. Within these progressive divisions, there are other specialty categories of foster homes such as: emergency, short-term, permanent, teacher, mentor, respite, medically fragile, and kinship homes.

A structure categorizing foster homes according to increased levels of care provided in meeting children's needs would need to be developed into policy. Based on standards set for these categories of foster homes, competencies necessary to perform tasks required of each category of foster parent must be identified and described.

Training should then assure achievement of these competencies. Tiers of professional development for foster parents could be designed around these definitions, and a structure of reimbursement rates for foster parents could be developed to match these tiers.

Any training necessary to bring new foster parents' skills to the basic standards of the first level of care must be delivered prior to placement of a child in the home.

RECOMMENDATION 3: To ensure that foster families have needed competencies, the department should develop, in collaboration with local agencies, a standardized assessment process and instruments. The local agency should use the assessments instruments to determine the foster parent's level of competency in specific categories, and to identify areas for further skill development necessary to meet the needs of children placed in the home.

Centralized Development Functions

Competency identification, curricula review and development, evaluation of assessment instruments, and certification of trainers can all be more efficient, more uniform and qualitative if they are centrally-located responsibilities. Training would be delivered regionally, either in area training centers or at local agencies, as the need is identified.

Centralized responsibility would include recruitment and certification of a core of geographically dispersed trainers to deliver training to foster parents. These trainers would be qualified to deliver an array of competency-based pre-service and in-service curricula. This central unit would also develop standardized competencies, assessment instruments and curricula for statewide use. Standardized pre-service and in-service curricula, instructing in the competencies, would ensure that foster parents receive consistent and adequate levels of skill development to meet children's needs.

Location of training is not as critical as access to training. Many foster parents have limited financial resources to access training, and some are employed full time. Training delivery must be flexible enough to meet the needs of foster parent schedules, learning styles, and ethnic and cultural traditions. If training cannot be located within easy access of foster parents, financial resources need to be made available for foster parents to obtain the training. Also, foster parents need to be reimbursed for the cost of attending mandated pre-service and in-service training. (See Table I.)

Table I

FOSTER PARENT TRAINING: CENTRALIZED FUNCTIONS

- **Definitions of and standards for different types of foster care:** Levels of foster care defined according to difficulty in children's needs and the skills necessary to meet them (i.e., regular, specialized, therapeutic). Within these progressive divisions there would be additional categories for specific functions of foster care (i.e., emergency, long-term, teacher homes, mentor, respite, kinship, medically fragile homes).
- **Competencies:** The knowledge and skills necessary for foster parents to effectively perform the tasks involved in foster care must be identified. These would be structured according to the levels and categories of foster care. Assessment process and instruments would identify the competencies of individual foster parents. An individualized training plan would surround the strengthening of competencies for foster parents.
- **Curricula:** A variety of competency-based pre-service and in-service curricula would be developed and provided for certified trainers to deliver. Curricula already used by agencies would be evaluated to ensure they train for the competencies established and required.

Pre-service training shall strengthen and prepare foster parents in the following competencies:

- o Knowledge of policy regarding foster care services;
- o Understanding the impact of separation on foster children, birth families, foster families and potential adoptive families, and how that affects placements;
- o Knowledge of the impact of abuse, neglect, separation and loss on the development of children of all ages;
- o Role of the foster parents and the caseworker;
- o Demonstrating appropriate and effective methods of discipline;
- o Working with birth parents towards the goal of return home;
- o Working towards the goals of the foster care plan;
- o All legal aspects of foster parenting; and,
- o Effects of foster parenting on the care-giving family.

In-service training might include training on how to deal with: HIV and substance exposed infants; substance abuse; sexual abuse; independent living skills for adolescents; appropriate use and maintenance of prosthetic devices; etc.

Training curricula must be easily understood by a diversely educated population, and must be culturally sensitive and delivered through a variety of media.

- **Trainers:** All trainers of foster parent curricula would be certified using a standardized certification process.
- **Tracking:** A computer data system would track training and verify certification of foster parents.

Decentralized Delivery Functions

Logistics and coordination of training delivery are better served as a decentralized function, and training is more efficiently delivered on a regional rather than a local basis. Agencies with foster parent trainers on staff would need to have these trainers certified through the same process as other trainers. Contracted trainers would be paid for training delivered.

Prior to placement, local agencies should orientate and disseminate basic pre-service information. Assessment of the new foster parents' competencies to meet the needs of the children entering the home are also critical. Assessment and knowledge of the foster parents' skills are essential to matching children's needs to foster parents' skills. As placement responsibility belongs to the agency, it is important that the process of completing the assessment also be the responsibility of the local agency approving the foster home. This provides an opportunity to establish relationships and begin building a team. Through this process, individualized training plans could be developed and implemented based upon the unique competency needs of each foster parent.

Time-frames for subsequent assessment and in-service training also need to be established. As foster homes are required by policy to be re-approved every two years, this would seem an appropriate point for reassessment of skills and knowledge. A plan of in-service competency-based skills and/or policy training for foster parents should be developed with the agency, based upon results of reassessment and the changing legal/policy environment. (See Table II.)

RECOMMENDATION 4: The department should implement a statewide program of policy and competency-based skills training for foster parents, including centralized development functions and decentralized delivery.

Model Development and Implementation

The department has developed through a series of contracts with local social service agencies and Virginia Commonwealth University a training system, Virginia Institute of Social Service Training Activities (VISSTA), to meet the training needs of local agency workers. This training system could be instrumental in developing a model for foster parent training. VISSTA is part of the department's Division of Service Programs and is a component of the training unit. VISSTA provides policy and competency-based skills training for local staff.

Table II

FOSTER PARENT TRAINING: DECENTRALIZED FUNCTIONS

- **Assessment:** Through a mutual assessment process, local agency staff and foster parents would complete an assessment instrument and develop an individualized training plan based on further training needs. New foster parents would need to be certified to have achieved a core level of competencies before approval as a foster home. Approved parents would be re-assessed at anniversary dates for re-approval by the agency. In-service training plans could be developed based on the kind of foster care to be provided and the training needed to strengthen the foster parents' skills in this category of care giving.
- **Approval:** The process for foster home approval must remain at the local level. In addition to other standards for foster homes, approval would be based on certification of a core level of competencies. Pre-service training would provide opportunities for potential foster parents to achieve these competencies.
- **Training Delivery:** Training would be delivered to foster parents at area training centers or at the local agency. The coordination of such training would be handled by area training coordinators.

Foster care workers and foster parents would jointly participate in training modules designed to build a service team.

Training delivery must be flexible enough to meet the needs of foster parents' schedules, learning styles, and ethnic and cultural traditions.

Foster parents should be able to take advantage of training initiatives, and local, state or national conferences and courses which strengthen their parenting skills, and have these meet the in-service training requirements when appropriate.

Reimbursement for the cost of training, mileage and day care expenses must be provided to assist foster parents attending mandated training.

Training is provided on a regional basis, through area training centers administered by local social service agencies. Standardized training curricula ensure that all local agency staff receive the same content.

The department, through its VISSTA program, contracts with Virginia Commonwealth University to develop the criteria for evaluating worker skills; develop competency-based curricula; assess, certify and train a corps of qualified trainers; track, record and monitor the training program; and provide ongoing consultation and technical assistance to the area training centers. Additionally, VISSTA is a member of a national child welfare competency-based training consortium, endorsed by the Child Welfare League of America, and through that, has access to foster parent competency-based training materials and technical assistance.

These activities place VISSTA in an optimum position to offer foster parent training initiatives.

FACTS and VISSTA are separate training components within the department's training unit, Division of Service Programs. Integrating FACTS training under the VISSTA training has several advantages:

- o Minimizes administrative overhead;
- o Reinforces a team concept by using the same system to deliver training to both agency workers and foster parents; and,
- o Ensures a more consistent delivery mechanism.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The department should expand its current training structure with Virginia Institute of Social Service Training Activities (VISSTA) to include foster parent training.

The funding requirements to implement mandated training appropriately are discussed in Chapter V.

III. SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR FOSTER FAMILIES

OVERVIEW

Supportive services enable foster parents to meet the needs of foster children in family-based care. The department and local agencies currently provide many supportive services to foster families such as liability insurance. Other services may include:

- o Respite care (temporary breaks in the care of children);
- o Day care;
- o Caseworker availability and support;
- o Family counseling services;
- o Transportation for the child; and
- o Other services as dictated by the needs of the foster child and family.

Generally, supportive services to foster parents are funded through federal Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds, and state and local funds. Since 1984, SSBG funds have not increased and agencies generally deplete these funds prior to the end of the fiscal year. This has resulted in increase use of state general funds for foster care services. Funding is exacerbated because agencies use the same funds to purchase residential care for foster children and costs for residential care have increased significantly since 1984. As a result, less funds are available for all other services.

This chapter focuses on **policy**, as well as **respite care**, **day care**, and **caseworker availability and support** to foster children and parents. The limited time frame of the report did not permit examination of other services.

POLICY

State policy and federal regulations lack specificity in regard to supportive services such as respite and day care for foster families or foster children. Respite care policy is currently being tested. The lack of clear, directive policy and insufficient funding for supportive services are barriers to consistent, statewide availability of supportive services.

Federal regulations and state statutes require that the service plan for the child assure that services are provided to the biological parents, child and foster parents in order to improve the conditions in the parents' home, facilitate return of the child to his own home or the permanent placement of the child, and address the needs of the child while in care. The appropriateness of the services that have been provided the child must be discussed in the plan.

Current policy provides guidance regarding supportive services for the foster parent, with minimal direction as to what, specifically, supportive services include. Local agencies have the authority to assess and identify services needed by the child, biological family, and foster parent, and must include them in the service plan.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The department should develop policy regarding supportive services for foster families and children. This policy must preserve families and promote statewide consistency of services for foster children. It must offer flexibility to local agencies and communities for the use of the most appropriate resources available. These services should be provided to support family-based placements and prevent more restrictive out-of-home placements.

RESPIRE CARE

Current Situation

Respite care, which means a temporary break in the care of foster children for foster families, is a fairly new and evolving service concept. It is growing in use throughout Virginia and the United States (GAO Report, 1990). The **Specialized Foster Care Study** (1987) indicated that 34% of local social service agencies in Virginia had provided at least some respite care services.

Foster parents often need respite care to continue foster parenting. (**Foster Care Study**, 1985). Respite care provides a temporary break in the care of children who are very demanding. The normal resources families use to take breaks from the care of children, such as family, neighbors, or friends, are often unwilling or ill equipped to provide temporary care for foster children.

The primary reasons for local agencies not providing respite care to foster parents and children have been lack of funding for respite care services, lack of developed services, and lack of policy.

The General Assembly funded pilot projects to establish respite care services for foster families during FY 90-92 to determine whether respite care improved foster parent recruitment and retention and maintained stable placements for children. Pilots were established in five localities in FY 90 and one additional locality in FY 92 to provide respite care to children in both specialized and regular foster care. In addition, a small respite fund pool was established in FY 91 that all localities could access to pay for respite care services. The fund pool continues through June 30, 1992.

Need

Many localities are identifying respite care as a necessary service for children in therapeutic foster care to relieve foster parents of the heavy demands of these children. **Program Standards for Treatment Foster Homes (1991)** and the **Specialized Foster Care Study (1987)** state that foster parents providing care to special needs children should have access to respite care services.

Volunteer Emergency Families for Children provide respite care services to foster children in many localities on a limited basis. Availability is generally limited to children who do not have special needs, to those who match homes available, and by the number of homes in a locality (**Respite Care Interim Report, 1990**). Other respite programs exist in a limited number of localities, but are usually targeted to specific disability populations; i.e., the mentally retarded, autistic, etc. (**Respite Resource Directory, 1991**).

Prior to being funded to develop respite care services for foster parents, the pilot agencies provided respite on a very limited basis, due to: (a) lack of trained respite providers, (b) lack of funding, (c) reduction of maintenance funds to foster parents when they used respite, and (d) lack of knowledge about respite care.

Currently, the department's respite care pilot projects are being evaluated by the Virginia Treatment Center for Children. The **Respite Care for Foster Families Final Report** (November 1991) includes findings regarding the effectiveness of respite care services and recommendations for future funding of respite care services. The data collected to date indicate that respite care has a positive effect on reducing placement disruption and maintaining stable community placements for foster children in the pilot projects. These findings are reaffirmed by the **GAO Report, 1989**, which indicated that respite care assists in retaining and recruiting foster parents and in maintaining stable community placements for children.

As a result, the department has requested additional respite care funding of

\$99,800 annually in general funds for FY 93 and FY 94 to expand respite care services.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The department should expand respite care services statewide, initially targeting localities with high foster care caseloads, a lack of community support for foster parents, a significant incidence of children with special needs, or an inadequate number of foster homes.

DAY CARE

Day care is defined as care for foster children when foster parents are at work outside the home. The availability of agency-paid day care varies across the state and is largely dependent on funds being available to pay for services.

In the past, many local social service agencies did not pay for day care for a foster child. Therefore, agencies have foster parents who were recruited and did not need day care. Agencies report that current and future recruitment of foster parents is being adversely affected by not paying for day care, as increasing numbers of parents need to work outside the home. Agencies also report that foster parents screen themselves out initially when they hear that day care is not provided.

Current Situation

Foster parents belonging to the Virginia Foster Care Association were surveyed to assess day care needs. (See Appendix E.) Of the 50 respondents, 44% said local agencies provided day care, 50% said they did not. While 4% indicated it was provided in special cases, 2% did not know whether day care was provided. Respondents from the same locality often differed on whether the local agency provided day care, indicating uncertainty about its provision.

The increasing need for day care due to more parents working outside of the home is supported by the following:

- (1) In Northern Virginia, half of the mothers with children under age five work outside the home.
- (2) Nationally, the Child Day Care Action Campaign estimates 21 percent of children under 15 are in child care.

- (3) Half of the foster parents responding to the survey indicated they needed day care for their foster children.
- (4) Fairfax County Department of Social Services estimates that over half of Fairfax County foster parents with foster children under age 12 use day care.
- (5) Roanoke City Department of Social Services, an agency that is providing day care on a case-by-case basis with approval required of the local board in each case, provides day care to 18% of its foster parents. Since providing day care, Roanoke has developed a surplus of foster homes.
- (6) In FY 91, infants under age one were the single largest age group coming into care (VACIS, 1991).

There is a need for day care services, but the department currently has no way of measuring through its financial management system how much local agencies or foster parents are spending for day care services for foster children. Day care services are needed, but the extent of the need can only be roughly estimated.

Funding Needs

Foster parents are subsidizing the state's cost of caring for children in foster care when they pay for day care. Local agencies pay \$246 per month in maintenance to foster parents for children age 0-4, for 24-hour care, seven days a week. It costs an average of \$228 per month to pay day care providers for eight hours of care, five days a week for children in this same age group, leaving \$18 per month to provide food, clothing, and other essential needs. Agencies lose current and potential foster parents when they do not pay for day care for foster children when foster parents need to work.

Additional funding for day care services would enable local social service agencies to pay for day care for foster children. However, it is difficult to accurately assess the amount of money needed for day care because local agencies have not consistently been providing day care when it was needed, and some have discouraged people from becoming foster parents by not providing day care.

The long-term goal of the department should be to fund day care for foster parents when it is needed. This approach will meet the needs of foster parents and aid

local agencies in recruitment and retention of foster parents. It recognizes that more parents are working outside the home and offers agencies a method to meet the challenge of finding substitute family care when parents are working outside the home.

Alternatively, local agencies could be encouraged to provide day care to foster parents with no additional funds appropriated, but this would mean that other vital services for foster children would be adversely impacted. Local agencies could also limit access by establishing eligibility requirements for day care payments; such as, paying for certain age groups, for full time care only, or for special needs children only. This would reduce costs, but could result in dissatisfaction on the part of foster parents not eligible for day care services and might create difficulties in recruiting foster parents for children not eligible under local agency criteria for day care.

Alternative Funding Sources

Funding day care services for those who need them is a costly alternative. Potentially, it would cost approximately \$2.1 million for full funding the first year. This cost is based on 21 percent of the foster care population under the age of 15 needing child care at an average rate of \$192 per month. (Rates for child care participation come from Child Day Care Action Campaign, and the average day care rate for all ages comes from the department's 1990 market survey for day care. Day care would not be requested for all children, and increases in funds for day care could be phased in over four years as the request for this service grows.

Alternative sources of funds besides state and local foster care funds should be explored for day care services.

- (1) Day care could be included in the foster parent maintenance rate, which would allow state expenditures for day care to be used to draw down Title IV-E federal money and reduce the burden on state and local agencies.

Federal regulations allow payment for "daily supervision" to be included in the maintenance payment and define "daily supervision" to include day care (Section 475 of the Social Security Act, ACYF-PA-82-01).

- (2) Foster children can be included as an eligible group for the new Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant funds.

Phasing in day care services would allow the department time to evaluate the need for day care services. It would also provide time for the department to implement some alternative strategies for funding day care.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The department should explore alternative sources of funding day care services for foster children and seek funding from the General Assembly to pilot the provision of day care.

CASEWORKER AVAILABILITY

Lack of caseworker availability has been cited frequently as a major problem in maintaining stable foster care placements. Lack of availability means that caseworkers are unable to respond in a timely manner when foster parents or children need their assistance. Foster parents voiced this at the 1990 state foster parent conference, and teens in foster care expressed this at the department's independent living conference. Foster care advocates often mention this as a problem.

Current Situation

Caseworkers have many demanding responsibilities that limit their availability. They may be in court, supervising a parental visit, staffing cases at an inter-agency session, moving a child, making multiple applications for services, completing required paperwork, and looking for a foster home for an emergency placement. Lack of caseworker availability interferes with the retention of foster parents and the ability of local agencies to maintain stable placements for foster children.

Agencies report that work required in a foster care caseload is much more involved, time consuming, and subject to documentation requirements than in other service areas. They also report that time spent on extensive documentation detracts from direct contact with foster parents, foster children and biological family members.

Foster families and children in therapeutic foster care programs experience greater caseworker availability due to smaller caseloads than foster children not served in these programs. Some agencies have foster home finders who provide additional support and services to foster families, and this increases caseworker availability to foster parents.

A perception exists at the local level that agencies do not have enough foster care caseworkers. When asked why, reasons cited were:

- (1) Agencies have been subject to increasing foster care work requirements. These include requirements for multiple inter-agency staffings for residential placements, staffings of developmentally delayed children who need early intervention services, seeking parental support for foster children, seeking supplemental security income (SSI) payments, doing transitional planning for handicapped children as they become adults, and meeting more strenuous court demands for caseworker supervision of visits after hours and on week ends. As a result, foster parents experience less worker contact and support.
- (2) Foster care caseworkers work with more than one person or family unit with each case. They work with the foster child, foster family, birth family, and all agencies that impact a child. The complexity of the child's service requirements, the number of family units and services agencies involved require a professional maturity from staff who are often entry level and who turn over at a rate of 20 to 25 percent a year (**Public Social Worker Turnover Study, 1990**).
- (3) In many localities caseworkers also are responsible for or assist with foster parent recruitment and training. In times of limited budgets, they become responsible for seeking donations and funds for activities benefitting foster children that are not funded through agency budgets. These funds are for camperships, foster parent recognition activities (banquets, picnics, etc), recreational activities for foster children, etc.

Despite these perceptions, the department's random moment sampling (RMS) of caseworker activities indicates that agency service staff (excluding employment service workers) spend approximately 25% of their time in foster care related work and 75% on other service work, including child protective services and adult services. These results, when matched to caseload, do not reflect a need for more caseworkers in foster care. Local agencies are apparently shifting worker activity into the foster care area and away from adult service areas. When RMS data are matched with caseloads, these data indicate foster caseloads are lower than those used in the current caseload standards model.

However, the feedback received from foster parents, teens, and local agencies indicates that lack of caseworker availability results in continuing and increasing

dissatisfaction on the part of foster parents, which adversely affects retention and recruitment.

Agencies report that foster parents are their chief means of referral for new foster parents. If foster parents are not spreading the good word about foster care, recruitment is adversely affected. Foster children suffer the consequences if there are not appropriate foster homes to meet their needs. Those consequences are inappropriate placements, frequent moves, abuse, and placement in expensive residential facilities.

Need and Alternatives

Local social service agencies need to ensure, as part of a support system for foster parents, that caseworkers are available to provide adequate support, information, and guidance to foster parents and children. They need to evaluate how they can increase caseworker availability. Increasing availability of caseworkers may be accomplished several ways:

- (1) Ensuring that caseload sizes are manageable for workers and allow time to provide support to foster families and children;
- (2) Increasing the skills of caseworkers and supervisors, so that they can better meet the demands of their jobs and be more effective with foster families and children;
- (3) Adding support personnel, such as foster home coordinators for decentralized delivery functions (implementing recruitment strategies, completing foster parent assessments, developing/fostering peer support systems);
- (4) Evaluating how other support personnel, such as case aides and clerical staff, can take on responsibilities that will free caseworkers to be more available to foster families and children; and
- (5) Identifying more efficient work procedures, including use of personal computers, related to forms and documentation requirements that free caseworkers to be more available to foster parents.

(The department has recently piloted a system to automate foster care forms and is in the process of implementing the program in additional localities. The department has a two year federal grant to expand this

system. About 50% of the grant will focus on foster care.)

Because foster children and parents need caseworkers available to them to provide support, information, and guidance, the department should endeavor to create a system that provides this support to foster parents.

RECOMMENDATION 9: The department should work toward decreasing the workloads of caseworkers by automating foster care records to reduce time required for paperwork.

RECOMMENDATION 10: The department should continue to monitor local caseloads through caseload standards and random moment sampling, and establish goals for foster care caseloads which consider all work needed with foster parent coordination.

RECOMMENDATION 11: The department should continue supporting training activities for caseworkers and supervisors to ensure that they have the basic skills to perform their job duties.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The department should facilitate the development of a foster parent consultation function at the local level.

The funding requirements are discussed in Chapter V.

IV. RECRUITMENT

OVERVIEW

Local social service agencies handle their own foster parent recruitment. However, staff face a difficult task identifying adults who are interested and qualified to be foster parents. With more single parent households, more women working outside the home, and higher costs of raising a child, fewer families are able to volunteer as a foster family home. In addition, local agencies also have less time for recruitment because of greater caseload responsibilities and demands.

Not only are local agencies challenged to recruit new families, but they are also challenged to retain approved foster parents. Foster parents typically leave the system. During April, May, and June 1991, 6% of the approved foster families stopped being foster parents. Although these data are not routinely tracked, it appears to be a typical occurrence. The **Foster Care Study, 1985**, found that foster homes approved in any given month, declined steadily at a rate of 5% for the year.

CURRENT RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Local Social Service Agencies' Efforts

The recruitment techniques used by agencies range from word-of-mouth and informal methods to planned campaigns. When agencies have few or no children in foster care, they wait for people to inquire about becoming foster parents. Other agencies may combine resources to develop recruitment strategies and campaigns. Major initiatives are discussed below.

Tri-Area Foster Families, TAFF (Albemarle, Greene, and Charlottesville Departments of Social Services) and **Rappahannock Area Foster Families Team, RAFFT** (Spotsylvania, King George, Caroline, and Fredericksburg Departments of Social Services) represent two pilot project cluster efforts which conduct ongoing recruitment activities in order to establish a pool of agency approved foster families, answer inquiries, and conduct orientation sessions for new foster homes.

Regional, Multi-Agency Efforts

Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William (five larger social service agencies in Northern Virginia) are members of a regional recruitment effort with Maryland and the District of Columbia. The group's goal is to publicize the need for foster parents. The Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (COG), a supporter of regional projects, supports this effort. Maryland supports the program with state funds, and five Virginia agencies each contribute \$3,000 annually.

In 1990 this effort was expanded. Under the auspices of COG, the Freddie Mac Corporation, in cooperation with TV Channel 4, funded a two month campaign including professional television ads, 800 telephone number, brochure, and their employees staffing phone lines. People who called the 800 number received brochures which referred them to a local agency. Without the regional arrangement already in place, these intensive campaigns would never have been possible.

Richmond City, Chesterfield and Henrico Departments of Social Services have worked cooperatively with WWBT television's "Children in Crisis" segment since February 1990, featuring foster children from these agencies who need families. As a direct result of WWBT features, 21 Richmond area children with special needs have been placed in foster or adoptive homes. Additionally, the agencies estimate a 50% increase in the number of homes approved for placing special needs children.

State Efforts

Designated department staff coordinate the publication of the Virginia Foster Care newsletter. The department has allocated funds to support the Virginia Foster Care Association (VFCA), the state foster parent association. To recognize the annual celebration of Foster Care Month in May, the department sends an information bulletin to encourage local agencies to broadcast in their area the need for foster parents and to recognize the contributions foster parents make to the child welfare program. While these efforts are positive, the amount of time that staff can dedicate to these activities is limited.

RECRUITMENT NEED

Ongoing recruitment is critical to maintaining an adequate pool of qualified foster families necessary to meet specific specialized needs of the children in care. An administrative structure and financial support are necessary to undertake and maintain an ongoing, intensive, comprehensive foster family recruitment and retention effort.

In the **1985 Foster Care Study**, 91% of the local agencies surveyed said they would like the state to take an active role in recruitment. Local agencies further wanted the state to develop: newspaper ads (75%), brochures and posters for local use (84%), television and radio spots (77%), and feature stories for local newspapers (69%). In a June 1991 telephone survey of local agencies, 119 agencies (96%) indicated a continued desire for the state to take a leadership role in foster parent recruitment, collaborating closely with local agencies.

The **1985 Foster Care Study** also found that local agencies felt that lack of knowledge of the program was the second highest reason that potentially qualified people do not become foster parents. Thus ongoing statewide publicity about the foster care program could be beneficial to recruitment efforts.

ALTERNATIVE

Planned collaboration among local agencies and the department will build increased support and public awareness of the need for foster families. A team approach (local social service agencies, department central and regional offices, foster parent associations and other interested child welfare groups working together) is more cost effective than having 124 local agencies working independently, each vying individually for resources and developing materials. Unions with foster parent associations have proven successful in other states and have demonstrated the usefulness of the teamwork approach to a foster parent recruitment and public education program.

RECOMMENDATION 13: For an initial foster parent recruitment program, the department should establish a system that provides for centralized administrative support from the department, and decentralized provision of services from local social service agencies.

DESIGN OF THE RECRUITMENT MODEL

An effective recruitment program should:

- o Insure prompt and timely responses to inquiries about foster parenting;
- o Educate the community about foster care, using foster parents and other interested child welfare groups as recruiters and by supporting foster parent associations;
- o Present a realistic message about what the job of foster parent entails;
- o Emphasize the job of the foster parent rather than the children needing care;
- o Send a positive message about the role of foster parents;
- o Emphasize working as part of a team (children, birth families, potential adoptive parents, and social workers);
- o Target recruitment strategies to fit the types of homes needed and all potential sources for foster families; and
- o Be continuous and ongoing.

RECOMMENDATION 14: To ensure an effective recruitment program in the state, the department should assume a leadership role in assisting local agencies recruit for foster parents. At a minimum, the department should:

- o **Establish a toll free telephone line staffed at central office to respond to foster care inquiries;**
- o **Develop initiatives that help local agencies to strengthen local foster parent programs such as peer support groups;**
- o **Develop and disseminate public awareness and public education materials; and**

- o **Provide technical assistance to local social service agencies and other interested groups to plan special foster care recognition events such as Foster Care Month and ongoing and continuous recruitment activities.**

The potential pool of foster families must hear the same or similar messages consistently through various media and over an extended period of time. Research indicates that potential foster parents generally think about becoming foster parents for at least a year before making a decision. Producing a set of publications that can be disseminated throughout the state would provide a uniform marketing approach and deliver a consistent theme. The development and use of brochures, posters, and advertisements can:

- o Improve the public image of the foster care program;
- o Target recruitment for foster care populations with the greatest need such as Black, adolescent and disabled children;
- o Identify the steps necessary to become a foster parent; and
- o Provide a consistent, unified, written response to those who inquire about becoming a foster parent.

In some metropolitan areas, local social service agencies have experienced increased competition from private child placing agencies. Well-designed marketing tools, developed to attract potential foster parents, will enable the department and local agencies to be competitive in their appeal.

RECOMMENDATION 15: The department should assure development of high quality brochures, flyers, posters, handbooks, and other prepared materials, and disseminate them to local social service agencies.

Current Utilization of Approved Homes: Improvements should be made in reporting foster parent data on new and closed foster homes in the department's information system. A more accurate information system will help the department and local agencies respond to inquiries about foster family care, forecast recruitment needs, and provide information for evaluation of program effectiveness.

For approved families who are under-utilized as foster family homes, strategies can be developed to possibly redeploy these families in such alternate ways as respite

care providers or other short-term volunteer services in the program.

Parent Assessment and Approval Processes: Retention of foster parents begins during the approval process. These processes should be reviewed for cultural sensitivity. Insensitive assessment of the appropriateness of a family may push even the most appropriate family from the program. At a minimum, analysis of the assessment questions should be undertaken to retain only those questions essential to determine a family's readiness to become foster parents.

Review of Policy and Procedures: Agency policies and procedures should also be reviewed for clarity regarding two important areas: the role of the foster family with the agency, and the foster parent/caseworker relationship. When retention is a problem, research indicates that role ambiguity plays a part in the foster family turnover rate. The use of job descriptions may be a way to clarify the foster parent role. Policy should stress teamwork and mutual decision making.

RECOMMENDATION 16: The department should analyze current utilization of approved foster family homes, review the parent assessment and approval process, and assess the foster families' role with the agencies and relationship to caseworkers with respect to the provision of foster care.

Model Development and Implementation

In order to effectively coordinate a foster parent recruitment program, the department would need a staff person for:

- o analyzing the local agencies' current foster parent approval process;
- o coordinating recruitment and public awareness activities statewide using effective recruiting principles;
- o serving as staff liaison and contact to foster parent associations, other interested individuals or child welfare groups and local social service agencies; and
- o collecting, maintaining and analyzing recruitment data for purposes of improving successful recruitment strategies for local agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 17: The department should hire one full time, permanent staff person to provide overall direction for foster care recruitment, and implement the recruitment strategies.

In response to the study charge, this report has described a model system of supports for foster parents providing family-based care for children. This system includes components for training, supportive services, and recruitment, for foster families. The combined recommendations are the model of family foster care supports. This model will be an expansion of the child welfare services, foster care program and, therefore, would require a budget increase. The feasibility options for each of the model's components: training, supportive services and recruitment, are discussed in Chapter V.

V. FEASIBILITY OPTIONS

OVERVIEW

While the preceding chapters addressed components of training, supportive services, and recruitment of foster parents, any one of these components cannot be successful without the others. If families are not interested in becoming foster parents, there is no one to be trained. If employed parents are interested but learn that child care costs cannot be covered, they may not pursue being foster parents. If parents are approved but receive little or no training or support, they may quit. Even if parents do receive training, they may quit if they receive no ongoing support from caseworkers or if the agency does not offer any options for respite care to give them a break.

This chapter presents options for developing and funding essential components to support the foster care program and the foster parents who are critical to the program's success. The analysis structures options by limiting the expansiveness of components at differing levels and time frames.

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM - OPTION 1

A comprehensive program, including pre-service and in-service training, a full range of supportive services, and recruitment would strengthen the foster care program and care provided through foster homes.

Training

Initial efforts for training would include development of a standardized pre-service training package, foster parent competency needs assessment process and instrument, competency based curricula, and an automated tracking program to monitor and record foster parent training. Ongoing efforts would include the provision of training to all foster parents. Costs would consist of expenditures for trainers; staff or contractors to coordinate, monitor and assist trainers and maintain curricula; area training center operation; and reimbursement for foster parents to attend training. For each year of the biennia, the costs would be broken down as follows:

o	VISSTA (staff, equipment, payment of trainers, overhead)	\$1,036,681
o	Area training centers (training coordination, travel, room rental, foster parent expenses)	\$ 916,815
	Total	\$1,953,496

Federal funding under Title IV-E is available to cover 75% of training costs (Total \$1,953,496: federal \$1,465,122, state \$488,374).

Supportive Services

Respite Care includes the cost to provide respite care services statewide, with the current 50-50 state and local match. The statewide cost is based on the experience of the respite care pilot projects where 17% of foster children used respite an average of 14 days a year at an average rate per day of \$53.75 per day. The state share would decrease with availability of federal funds if HR 2571 (Downey Bill) passes and allows federal reimbursement for respite care services. It is uncertain whether this legislation will pass.

Child Day Care includes an estimate of the cost to provide day care to all foster children who need it. The cost is based on 21% of foster children needing day care under the age of 15 at a cost of \$192 per month, which is the average cost for day care found in the department's market survey for day care services. The estimate assumes a 10% local match, the same that is charged to localities for other day care services.

Automation includes enhancements to the piloted computer applications and provision of computers and training to a limited number of localities. In addition, costs for a trainer to train localities in the use of the existing foster care software, travel, and printing (\$70,000) are included for one year. Enhancements are possible in this biennium due to a two-year federal grant (total of \$50,000 in FY 93 and total of \$12,500 in FY 94) effective October, 1991, to expand personal computer applications in child welfare. About 50% of the grant will focus on foster care.

Foster parent consultation includes the cost to develop and provide foster parent support activities in local agencies. This statewide cost is based on agencies' providing one hour of support or contact at approximately \$13.00 per hour to 3,000 foster families per week (\$13.00 hour x 3000 families x 52 weeks =

\$2,028,000). This would be funded through federal Title IV-E funds, and state and local funds.

Recruitment

Initial costs necessary for the recruitment model include state staff (\$50,687), the development of a public awareness and recruitment campaign, to include establishing a toll free line at the department (\$15,000) and the development and printing of media materials (\$50,000) for a total of \$115,687 for FY 93. One quarter of IV-B funds are included the first year. Continuing costs would include a reduced amount of media advertising expenditures (\$10,000), state staffing costs to coordinate recruitment efforts, and continuation of the public awareness campaign for a total of \$75,687 for FY 94.

Table III provides the cost for full statewide implementation of the report's recommendations for FY 93 and 94. Most costs would continue in subsequent years, with adjustments needed for inflation.

**TABLE III
COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM (FY 93 and 94)**

Services	Total	Federal	State	Local
Training				
FY 93	\$1,953,496	\$1,465,122	\$488,374	\$0
FY 94	\$1,953,496	\$1,465,122	\$488,374	\$0
Respite Care				
FY 93	\$827,134	\$0	\$413,567	\$413,567
FY 94	\$827,134	\$0	\$413,567	\$413,567
Day Care				
FY 93	\$2,100,000	\$0	\$1,890,000	\$210,000
FY 94	\$2,100,000	\$0	\$1,890,000	\$210,000
Automation	¹			
FY 93	\$120,000	\$37,500	\$82,500	\$0
FY 94	\$12,500	\$9,375	\$3,125	\$0
Foster Parent Consultation				
FY 93	\$2,028,000	\$405,600	\$1,014,000	\$608,400
FY 94	\$2,028,000	\$405,600	\$1,014,000	\$608,400
Recruitment				
FY 93	\$115,687	\$28,922	\$86,765	\$0
FY 94	\$75,687	\$0	\$75,687	\$0
Total				
FY 93	\$7,144,317	\$1,937,144	\$3,975,206	\$1,231,967
FY 94	\$6,996,817	\$1,880,097	\$3,884,753	\$1,231,967
Total				
FY 93				
FY 94	\$14,141,134	\$3,817,241	\$7,859,959	\$2,463,934

¹ Total includes \$70,000 for training and 50% (\$50,000) of a federal grant for which non-federal funding is already committed.

PHASED-IN PROGRAM - OPTION 2

Because the department anticipates limited funding and has concerns about effectively initiating all of the recommendations of this report immediately, a phased-in program has been considered. A phased-in program would build a comprehensive program over three biennia. Phase 1 would cover FY 93 and 94 and include:

Training

- o Assessment of training needs of foster parents;
- o Development and testing of curricula for pre-service and in-service training;
- o Certification of trainers;
- o Delivery of basic pre-service training to all new foster parents and other identified foster parents; and
- o Development, testing and implementation of an automated system to track and monitor foster parent training.
- o Cost in general funds would be \$488,374 per year.

Supportive Services

- o Piloting of respite care to additional localities with the continuation of \$180,200 general funds and an additional \$99,800 in new general funds;
- o Investigating federal funds for day care during FY 93 and piloting day care beginning in FY 94 using general funds (\$234,000) for 100 children if no federal funds are available; and
- o Further development and testing of an automated personal computer package for local foster care workers, using 50% of the funds of an approved federal grant (\$50,000 FY 93, \$12,500 FY 94).

Recruitment

- o No funding

Table IV shows costs for Phase 1.

**TABLE IV
OPTION 2: PHASE 1 (FY 93 and 94)**

Services	Total Funds	Federal	State	Local
Training				
FY 93	\$1,953,496	\$1,465,122	\$488,374	\$0
FY 94	\$1,953,496	\$1,465,122	\$488,374	\$0
Respite Care				
FY 93	\$99,800	¹ \$0	\$99,800	\$0
FY 94	\$99,800	\$0	\$99,800	\$0
Day Care				
FY 93	\$0	¹ \$0	\$0	\$0
FY 94	\$260,000	\$0	\$234,000	\$26,000
Automation ²				
FY 93	\$50,000	\$37,500	\$12,500	\$0
FY 94	\$12,500	\$9,375	\$3,125	\$0
Total FY 93	\$2,103,296	\$1,502,622	\$600,674	\$0
Total FY 94	\$2,325,796	\$1,474,497	\$825,299	\$26,000
Total FY 93-94	\$4,429,092	\$2,977,119	\$1,425,973	\$26,000

¹ Federal funds may be available for respite care and day care if HR 2571 passes or other alternative federal funding is secured for day care.

² Based on 50% of a federal grant for which non-federal funding is already committed.

The department would need to design an evaluation to determine impacts of initiatives in training and supportive services on the foster care program. The design effort would include collection of baseline data regarding foster home

approvals, closures, tenure, foster parents trained, and other information essential to establishing baseline data.

Phase 2, covering a span of two years, FY 95 and 96 could include:

Training

- o Continuing assessment of foster parents' competencies;
- o Continuing delivery of pre-service training;
- o Delivery of in-service training to foster parents assessed as needing training; and,
- o Continuing evaluation of curricula and training effectiveness.
- o Cost in general funds would be \$507,909 each year.

Supportive Services

- o Continuation of and expanded piloting of respite care and child day care services to additional localities and children, with an evaluation of the impacts;
- o Training for workers to use the automated package, including costs for trainer, travel, and materials;
- o Development and implementation of strategies to increase availability of caseworkers for foster parent consultation with gradual implementation in selected localities and evaluation of the results in FY 95, and expanded in FY 96 to additional localities with continued evaluation. Estimated first year cost is based on 750 foster families receiving one hour of consultation/support (at approximately \$13.00 per hour x 52 weeks).

Recruitment

- o No funding

Table V provides the estimated costs for Phase 2.

Table V
OPTION 2: PHASE 2 (FY 95 and 96)

Services	Total	Federal	State	Local
Training				
FY 95	\$2,031,636	\$1,523,727	\$507,909	\$0
FY 96	\$2,031,636	\$1,523,727	\$507,909	\$0
Respite Care		¹		²
FY 95	\$244,550	\$0	\$203,792	\$40,758
FY 96	\$244,550	\$0	\$203,792	\$40,758
Day Care		¹		
FY 95	\$380,000	\$0	\$342,000	\$38,000
FY 96	\$380,000	\$0	\$342,000	\$38,000
Automation				
FY 95	\$72,800	\$0	\$72,800	\$0
FY 96	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Foster Parent Consultation				
FY 95	\$507,000	\$101,400	\$253,500	\$152,100
FY 96	\$1,014,000	\$202,800	\$507,000	\$304,200
Total FY 95	\$3,235,986	\$1,625,127	\$1,380,001	\$230,858
Total FY 96	\$3,670,186	\$1,726,527	\$1,560,701	\$382,958
Total FY 95-96	\$6,906,172	\$3,351,654	\$2,940,702	\$613,816

All continuing costs have been increased for the biennium by 4%.

1

Federal funds may be available for respite care and day care if HR 2571 passes or other alternative federal funding is secured for day care.

2

Phasing in of a local match estimated at 20%.

Phase 3, covering two years, FY 97 and 98, would allow further implementation of the comprehensive program, with the inclusion of:

- o Modifications, if appropriate, to training curricula, delivery, and tracking;
- o Implementation of the recruitment model; and
- o Further expansion of supportive services based on the assessment of the impacts of expanded training and supportive services on the foster care system.

Phase 3 would include continuing costs for services (plus 4% inflation), expansion of day care, respite, and foster parent consultation and implementation of the recruitment model. The amount of increase in costs would depend on the extent of implementation of supportive services. Increases in general funds could range from \$3 million to \$4.3 million for the biennium depending on the results of the assessment of services delivered in the previous four years and decisions about the need for expansion.

Clearly the advantages for option 2, a phased-in program, are that funding needs are spread over several years and that changes can be made as the comprehensive program is developed over time.

MINIMAL PROGRAM - OPTION 3

Although not optimum, a minimal program (with critical parts of the comprehensive program) could have a positive impact on the foster care program. At a minimum, foster parents need basic pre-service training across the state as well as ongoing support when they are caring for a child in foster care. For those caring for children with special needs or problems, further training to assist them in handling the special needs or problems is essential. In addition, caseworker availability is crucial to support the foster parents as they cope with day-to-day problems.

A minimum program would include, in order of priority:

- o Development, testing, and implementation of pre-service and in-service training to foster parents;
- o Expansion of supportive services, such as respite care and day care;

- o Support for strategies to increase caseworker availability; such as automation and foster parent support functions within local agencies; and
- o Development of recruitment materials for statewide distribution.

Option 3 – Minimal Program: The cost of this option depends on the level of support for each item listed above.

RECOMMENDATION ON OPTIONS

RECOMMENDATION 18: The department should use the phased-in approach as presented in Option 2 of the report, as it permits funding needs to be spread over a period of time, allows for evaluation of progress along the way, and addresses the needs identified to strengthen the foster care program.

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APPENDIX A
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APPENDIX B
SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 259

Requesting the Department of Social Services to study the feasibility of mandating training for foster parents and of developing statewide policies regarding supportive services for foster parents and foster parent recruitment.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 4, 1991

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 15, 1991

WHEREAS, the 1990 General Assembly created a joint subcommittee to review the foster care system in the Commonwealth pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution No. 73; and

WHEREAS, the joint subcommittee conducted a comprehensive study of the status of the foster care system in the Commonwealth and heard from foster parents, foster children, child advocates, the Department of Social Services, local social services agencies, private providers of foster care, and other concerned persons; and

WHEREAS, the joint subcommittee heard substantial testimony about the benefits of providing foster parent training and other supportive services such as respite care, day care and availability of caseworkers for foster parents; and

WHEREAS, the joint subcommittee strongly believes that Virginia's children in foster care deserve the best and most professional care possible; and

WHEREAS, the joint subcommittee learned that many children coming into the foster care system are older children who exhibit more severe emotional disturbances, having experienced dysfunctional lifestyles for a longer period of time, resulting in the need for qualified, sensitive and professional care; and

WHEREAS, the joint subcommittee believes that foster parents of Virginia's children need to be well prepared to meet the multiple needs of children entering the foster care system; and

WHEREAS, the joint subcommittee learned that one of the major reasons that foster parents decide to stop being foster parents is because the needs of the child are greater than expected; and

WHEREAS, foster parent training can prepare potential foster parents for the demanding job of foster parenting; and

WHEREAS, respite care, day care, the availability of caseworkers and other services provide support for foster parents that enables them to view foster parenting much more positively, increases their effectiveness as foster parents and makes them more willing to continue as foster parents; and

WHEREAS, when foster parents resign it causes placement disruption which is very distressing for children who have already experienced separation from their birth families and adds to their inability to adjust to a new environment; and

WHEREAS, foster parent resignation is a significant burden on overworked caseworkers who must expend significant time and energy to find new placements for children and to recruit new foster parents; and

WHEREAS, placement disruption could be reduced if children were placed in foster families who were well-trained and possessed the skills necessary to meet the complex, multiple needs of children in care; and

WHEREAS, preservice and inservice foster parent training have been shown to empower foster parents to skillfully and sensitively deal with the devastating impact of abuse and neglect on a child's life; and

WHEREAS, effective, well-trained foster parents can assist caseworkers in enhancing the parenting skills of birth parents, thereby enabling a potentially more successful return home for the child; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Department of Social Services study the feasibility of (i) mandating foster parent training in the Commonwealth, (ii) developing a statewide policy regarding supportive services such as respite care, day care and the availability of caseworkers for foster parents, and (iii) developing a statewide model for foster parent recruiting. The study shall address, but not be limited to, the following issues: the fiscal and programmatic impact of mandating preservice and inservice training for foster parents and of implementing a statewide policy regarding supportive services; the most effective and efficient methods for providing such statewide training, including curricula development and training delivery, and for providing supportive services and for recruiting foster parents; and identification of resources and time frames necessary to implement these programs.

The Department of Social Services shall submit a report to the Youth Services Commission by September 1, 1991, and shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1992 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

APPENDIX C

FOSTER CARE DATA: 6,304 CHILDREN IN CARE AS OF JUNE 30, 1991

° RACE	Number	Percent
White	2934	46.5
Black	3001	47.6
Other Races	369	5.9
° LEGAL BASIS		
Abuse/Neglect	3988	63.3
Needs Services	668	10.6
Delinquency	128	2.0
Entrustment Agreement	712	11.3
Request Relief	726	11.5
Cannot Be Determined	82	1.3
° PERMANENCY GOAL		
Return Home	3271	51.9
Adoption	1281	20.3
Permanent Foster Care	577	9.2
Placed With Relative	250	4.0
Continued Foster Care	828	13.1
To Be Determined	97	1.5
° TYPE OF PLACEMENT		
Foster Family Homes	4572	72.5
Residential	622	9.9
Own Home	483	7.7
Other	436	6.9
Independent Living	161	2.6
State Institution	30	.5

SOURCE: Virginia Client Information System

APPENDIX D REFERENCES

Surveys of Other States

New Jersey Department of Human Resources and Foster Parent Association
Massachusetts Department of Social Services
Kentucky Cabinet for Human Resources
Georgia Department of Human Resources
Delaware Department of Health and Social Services
Tennessee Department of Human Services
Maryland Department of Human Services
District of Columbia Department of Human Services

Telephone Surveys

Local Social Service Agencies
Department of Social Services Regional Specialists
Local Foster Care Supervisors
Members of the Virginia Foster Care Association

Interviews

Nancy Abell, Loudoun County Department of Social Services
Gordon Evans, Information and Services, National Foster Parent Association
Robert Hagstrom, New York State Department of Social Services; Albany, New York
Janet Hodge, President, Virginia Foster Care Association
D. J. McFadden, Eastern Michigan University; Ypsilanti, Michigan
Toni Oliver, Child Welfare Institute; Atlanta, Georgia
Eileen Pasztor, Child Welfare League of America; Washington, DC
Mick Polowy, New York State Child Welfare Training Institute; Buffalo, New York
Sasha Russell, Houston, Texas
Julie Springwater, Massachusetts Department of Social Services
Al Stump, Center for Development of Human Services; Albany, New York
Wilbert Talley, Reverend, President Virginia One Church, One Child
Jake Terpstra, Department of Health & Human Services; Administration for Children, Youth and Families; Washington, D.C.

**APPENDIX E
FOSTER PARENT SURVEY
VIRGINIA FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION
JUNE 1991**

1. Does your local agency pay for day care for foster children?
Yes 44% No 50% In Special Cases 4% Do not know 2%

2. Do you need day care for your foster children:
Yes 50% No 50%

3. How many foster children do you have placed in your home?
One 57% Two 32% Three 5% Four 5% None 1%

4. What are the ages of children needing day care?
0-5 yrs. 54% 6-10 yrs. 32% 11+ yrs. 14%

Number of foster parents responding = 50

Number of localities represented = 35

APPENDIX F

Draft copies of this report were sent to the Youth Services Commission, the Virginia League of Social Service Executives. In each case, written comments were requested and received. The comments are included with this report.

Appropriate technical corrections and additional information resulting from the responses have been made in this version of the report.



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Youth Services Commission

Members:

Delegate J. Samuel Glasscock, *Chairman*
Senator R. Edward Houck, *Vice Chairman*
Delegate Joan H. Munford
Delegate Jerrauld C. Jones
Senator Edwina Dalton Phillips
Delegate Linda M. Rollins
Mrs. Elizabeth N. Embrey
Mr. Robert E. Shepherd, Jr.

October 21, 1991

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Director
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Virginia Department of Social Services
Blair Building
8700 Discovery Drive
Richmond, Virginia 23229-8699

Dear Demis:

On behalf of the Youth Services Commission, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Department of Social Services' draft of the "Feasibility Study: Recruitment, Training and Supportive Services for Foster Families". I hope you find the enclosed comments helpful. I would be very interested in receiving information regarding feedback you received on the report from the local departments.

When you have the opportunity, please let me know how you envision the recommendations proceeding from here, especially as it relates to the involvement of the Youth Services Commission.

As always, I appreciate your help and support.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Nancy H. Ross'.

Nancy H. Ross
Executive Director

cc: Mr. Larry Jackson
Youth Services Commission Members

The Department of Social Services' Feasibility Study: Recruitment, Training and Supportive Services for Foster Parents was prepared as a result of the 1991 General Assembly' House Joint Resolution 259. The resolution requested the Department of Social Services to conduct a study and submit their report to the Youth Services Commission on September 1, 1991. The comments that follow are based on a review of the draft report submitted to the Youth Services Commission at their September 13th meeting.

The Youth Services Commission affirms the necessity of providing foster parents with training to better enable them to deal effectively with an increasingly complex population. It also recognizes the need for supportive services to help retain good foster parents and the need for more aggressive recruitment techniques in the 1990s.

The Department is to be commended for the work they and the other members of the study group have put into conducting the feasibility study. The Commission supports the general recommendations and intent of the study. The following points of consideration are offered as a means to further refine the recommendations in light of limited resources facing the Commonwealth and increasing the efficiency of the existing foster care system. The comments that follow are listed by the number of the recommendations with comments on the feasibility options listed at the end.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1:
Support

Recommendation #2:

While it is appropriate for the central office to assume a leadership role in assisting local agencies in their recruitment efforts, does this necessarily entail the Department developing the materials themselves? The report mentions the affect of "competition" from private child placing agencies in recruitment efforts. In addition to varying reimbursement rates, might this not also be due to the access private agencies have to marketing tools and resources less available to the public sector? Marketing and product development (i.e. brochures, public service announcements, etc.) have become an increasingly sophisticated field. Rather than the Department spend its time and resources in this arena, might it not be advantageous to solicit the contribution of an advertising/marketing firm on a *pro bono* basis to conduct a recruitment campaign. In addition to broadening a public/private sector partnership, this approach might yield a more effective product at a fraction of the cost. The Department would serve as a consultant to the project and the goal of uniform quality information available statewide would still be reached. Many firms look for public service projects to undertake and foster parent recruitment appears to be in keeping with similar *pro bono* efforts. The success of the CADRE campaign underscores the effectiveness of successful partnerships with private sector advertising firms.

Recommendation #3:
Support

Recommendation #4:

Is not foster home utilization information available at the local level? The redeployment of underutilized homes also appears an issue in which the solution rests at the local level. While the goal of more accurate tracking of foster home utilization is an understandable one, it is unclear how this information would be employed at a central office level other than in the provision of technical assistance in the areas related to training. Clarification of "non-traditional" approaches of assessment would be helpful in responding to this recommendation.

Recommendation #5:

Support, but we would suggest a staff person not be responsible for the development of recruitment materials (see response to Recommendation #2).

Recommendation #6:

Support only with the provision of adequate funds.

Recommendation #7:

Support in concept, however, without adequate resources, the revision of the Code in the manner suggested might unintentionally penalize both local agencies,

foster parents and foster children. Given the phased-in nature of the recommendation, it is suggested that #1 be delayed until the Department's state and local foster parent training capacities are operational and can adequately address the needs.

Recommendation #8:

Support the concept and would further recommend that representatives from local agencies be convened to develop the instrument.

Recommendation #9:

Clarification is needed on what is currently in place with respect to foster parent training as it relates to the VISSTA program. While the central office should play a coordinating role, the development of competency-based skill areas should be derived from dialogue with local departments and foster parent associations.

Recommendation #10:

More information is required on evaluations of VISSTA's current training capacities and satisfaction with training received, prior to supporting this recommendation.

Recommendation #11:

Support

Recommendation #12:

Support as conceptually presented in Option 2 of a phase-in approach with General Fund dollar figures adjusted pending federal match rates. Tables III, IV, and V show no federal dollars on day care. Support of recommendation pending analysis of federal contribution.

Recommendation #13:

Support the concept, yet would encourage the Department not to combine funding requests for automation of local departments with requests for training, recruitment and respite services for foster parents.

Recommendation #14:

Support

Recommendation #15:

Support

Recommendation #15:

Support

Recommendation #16:

Support

FEASIBILITY OPTIONS

The Youth Services Commission concurs with the Department that a phased-in funding approach which builds a comprehensive program over three bienniums is the most realistic strategy. There are components in this approach which we suggest be revisited with the goal of developing a fundable package. Specifically, under recruitment, it is difficult to ascertain in Table IV how much of the FY93 \$90,687 and FY94 \$75,687 totals are for the development and printing of recruitment materials. If *pro bono* services were secured, what would the adjusted state dollar figures be specifically?

Respite care figures would drastically change pending passage of the Downey bill (The Family Preservation Act). Have alternate scenarios been developed if this federal legislation passes? How would this impact state share and local match in the FY95-96 biennium? The same concerns apply to federal funding for day care services.

Lastly, while clearly the automation of local departments would benefit all involved in the foster care system, it is an issue which cuts across all aspects of local departments of social services. How much of the federal share of automation costs would be deployed towards foster care and conversely, how much of training for other parties in addition to foster care workers? Resolution of these issues would clearly have a fiscal impact on the Departments' request.

Again, on behalf of the Youth Services Commission, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to this report and look forward to continuing to work with the Department on this issue,



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
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October 21, 1991

Ms. Sandra Whitaker
Program Manager
Foster Care and Adoption Services
Virginia Department of Social Services
Blair Building - 8007 Discovery Drive
Richmond, VA 23229-8699

Dear Ms. Whitaker:

Per your request of September 17, 1991, I am forwarding comments on A Feasibility Study: Recruitment, Training and Supportive Services for Foster Families on behalf of the Services Committee of the Virginia League of Social Service Executives.

Overall, the VLSSE Services Committee supports the recommendations contained in the report. However, it is important that sufficient funding be available to assure implementation without lessening the availability of other needed services. We are also concerned that insufficient discussion has been devoted to the need for additional respite care, day care and other supportive services for foster families. Additional funding is needed to provide these critical services. Further, lower social worker caseloads would dramatically improve the quality of family foster care provided to children in approved family foster homes. Reduced caseloads would provide workers with additional time to work intensively with both natural and foster families and children. Additional discussion of these areas should be included in the report.

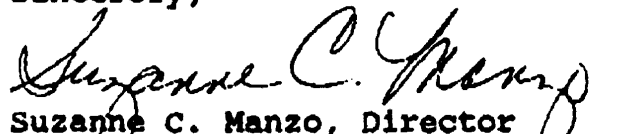
The creation of a mandatory training program for foster parents has the potential to reduce the number of families interested in providing foster care. If a mandatory program is introduced, parents must have incentives for participation. Incentives include day care during training, transportation to training and compensation for participation. Otherwise, implementation of the report's recommendations could deplete the already inadequate supply of Virginia foster parents.

Ms. Sandra Whitaker
October 21, 1991
Page Two

Finally, I would like to make a correction regarding service provision in Fairfax County. Page 26 contains a technical error in item 4: the Department of Human Development estimates that over half of Fairfax County foster parents with foster children under age 12 use day care.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the report. We look forward to working with you further on these issues.

Sincerely,


Suzanne C. Manzo, Director
Department of Human Development

SCM/DB/rmt

cc: John Holdren, President
Virginia League of Social Service Executives

VLSSE Service Committee Members