

A one-day survey presented (Facebook: Idaho Foster Care Reform)

99 total respondents

87% are current or former foster parents

68% entered foster care within past 5 years (they have formed this belief structure very quickly)

48% *believe* it is not easy to give feedback

62% *believe* input to a caseworker will be ignored or will cause retaliation from Department

61% *believe* appealing to a supervisor will be ignored or cause retaliation from the Department

94% *believe* a caseworker's highest priority with respect to a foster child is to comply with Department policy or complete the case in the simplest way possible

77% *believe* they have no recourse for appeal of decisions

The result:

6% are likely to refer their friends to participate in foster care

96% do not believe they will be participating in foster care 5 years from now

If you had the power to change one thing about how the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare interacts with a foster child, what would it be?

- Actually doing what's in the best interest for the foster child.
- Allow foster families to have a voice and have that voice be valued, have the foster family be treated as a knowledgeable part of the team and really be able to weigh in...Health and Welfare had a god persona
- Having a stricter visitation policy. Its hard to watch birth parents get away with so much, and still getting visits. I have had one foster daughter have weekly visits with her grandfather a known pedophile with no certified supervision in the name of "maintaining family connection". With another case, the parents were supposed to have supervised visits in the department, but they were so inconsistent with showing up to their visits, the tech no longer reserved a room.... and then the parents got a community visit, like they wanted. rewarded for poor behavior.
- The very first position any case worker should hold is foster parent for 6 months. With the same kids and issues they will deal with on the other side later. I have said this before, it would make them really see what good foster parents do, maybe they would respect our opinions better later. Our court system seems to simply do what the department asks, foster parents are ignored, GAL are ignored, state says it, judge oks it ...next !
- Put the wefare of the child FIRST! Respect what the foster parent is saying and learn about why they feel the way they do
- To actually do what's in the best interest of the child & not what's more comfortable for the parent/guardian
- Listen attentively to the concerns (and warning a) of the family who know the parents best.. It's NOT always beat to send the children back. The policies and procedures and requires standards are constantly compromised it seems in order to close the case. I've been fortunate enough to adopt my two grandsons even after expressing grave concern and endless arguing with my case worker who wanted to send these

boys back to their mother (my daughter) who accomplished only one of 6 required elements to maintain her parental status. My case worker had one agenda...and it was not in the best interest of these boys.

- IDHW needs an overhaul. Whoever has been and is running it and directing it needs to be prosecuted for the absolute atrocious care of the current children and those who survived it and are now dealing with PTSD. It is a blatant abuse of power and greed for federal dollars to be fed to Idaho's government officials.
- Their power struggle and lying to foster families. There is no record or recourse.
- Consider the child's best interest rather than the dept's procedures or the law.
- Being honest from the beginning and supportive to the children they oversee
- Listen to their needs, and what they want instead of what box needs to be checked at this visit.
- Remove their cold cold hearts and actually do what is best for the child. I was repeatedly lied to and taken for granted. Cps has too much power and they abuse it. They need an oversight committee to reign them in. Children are enduring long term psychological disorders from them bouncing them from house to house and removing them from their long term care placement of people who have loved them and cared for them as their own to replace them at will not considering the long term psychological damage it does to the children who are snatched away without warning and rehomed. They treat their foster families with total arrogance and disregard, yet wonder why it is so hard to continue to find families willing to participate. Their callous deceitful actions not only destroy children but also causes emotional damage to the participating families who started fostering for the best reasons. I dearly loved the adorable child I had for 2 years who was ripped from my home. It has and always will be traumatic for my entire family and friends to remember the cold callous evolution and disregard Cps not only had for the child, but to me, and the entire community who supported me and Emma. She was loved and adored, and the entire community was devastated at the disregard for a small child's long term psychological well being and future when she was ripped from the only family she ever knew for her entire life and to be swooped out of daycare and sent to basic strangers two states away, never to see us again.
- Realize that family placement isn't always best and ICWA isn't always in the best interest of the child. And larger families can be excellent resources. A magical family size number doesn't make or break a family's ability to care for children, either.
- To put a time frame/limit on a child's placement in foster care and the families ability to get them back. Also to let everyone know the time frame so that the kids know, their parents know, and the foster parents know what to expect.
- Fire, with cause, the top 3 levels of management.
- Repercussions to the bio-parents, not allowing bio-parents to have say in travel and other basic areas, keeping the same case worker from start to finish, teaching foster parents the basics on how the program works and the court process and recourses (which is what I thought PRIDE would do but never did). Treating us like human beings who are ultimately the only ones who are taking care of the children.
- More communication with the foster family and therapist, we see them everyday. Little to no communication. And we have been waiting now for over 6 weeks for a judge's decision to come in on the parental termination trial last Jan. 5th. Ridiculous amount of time these children have been in limbo.
- To take the advice/recommendation about some of the care of a foster child's health and welfare from the foster parents. After all, it is the foster parents that live with the child and can see their needs the most. Not every child lives by the books that the workers are educated with. Not all kids (very few in fact) react the same. Some are grateful to be away from biological family....some are very very angry. Each child's needs should be met where they are.

- The department and courts need to stop looking at what the parent need or want and focus on the best interests of the children
- Listen to them And what their desires are. The children will tell you If they are able and allowed to what they want and how they really feel. The problem is they are coerced Or don't feel safe doing so
- I would recommend that new caseworkers be trained by experienced caseworkers to recognize some of the games that both families play and the stories that they tell. It's not always the truth.
- Listen to the foster parents and doctors, counselors Exedra of what's best for the child. Not being afraid of going up against mom and dad's attorney due to they are usually attorney for the Department of Health and Welfare. Not moving a child due to the department being afraid of mom. Sticking for foster parents with bio parents make false allegations false allegations against them and they investigate and find out it's not true and not stand up in court for the foster parents in court instead of throwing them underneath the bus. Not inspect foster parents to provide transportation for mom and dad and necessary things for the kids during the visit like car seats diapers food Exedra for the kids during their visit with mom and dad. I really would like to see you more standard timelines for parents and relatives coming forward I feel they need to be in their lives earlier than after termination. When a child or children have been and care for over 2 years and then introduced to relative for two weeks then expected for them to go live with them not really knowing them at all. And foster parents wanted to adopt the relatives come first even after two years and not even knowing the children.
- I would insist on more visitation between foster family and case workers. Followed by stricter foster care background checks and possibly even drug tests.
- That these children are automatically adopted by a family member even if they don't know them and are attached to the foster family.
- I would like to actually see our caseworker. In the 8 months sleep had our 3 foster kids, we only saw him twice. He never returned our phone calls when we had a concern. He wasn't there for the kids.
- Give foster children the opportunity to have good, permanent homes with foster parents who want to adopt them instead of putting them back with screwed up families.....If no one stepped in to help the kids before they went to foster care, why do you trust them to be there for them long term?
- Take seriously the opinions and recommendations of people who KNOW the child and interact with them on a daily basis - teachers, counselors, doctors, coaches, and foster parents. Case workers spend at BEST 30 minutes a month with the child.
- Give foster parents more rights in the permanent placement of the child. For example: Foster parents should have a first priority to adopt (even over relatives) if the child has lived in their home for more than 12 continuous months. Foster parents should have a right to intervene as a party in ANY proceeding involving the custody of the child if the child has lived in their home for more than 12 continuous months. In perm hearings, if a relative has brought a custody petition, a foster parent with more than 12 months of continuous care should be able to object to custody being awarded to the relative and force a "best interests hearing".
- To simply keep children SAFE. blood is overrated. and care for 18 plus years is underrated.
- Not all "policies" and "directives" work in the best interest of the child and foster families. Work collaboratively with foster families and foster children, and not strong arm foster families in to positionsee they are not comfortable with. Stop forcing the issues of guardianship of foster children on foster parents. Some situations work best for kids and families with the additional monthly stipend lost with guardianship. Caseworkers are only concerned with policy, directives (state and federal) to get kids off

the books. Educate foster families about what resources and help is available to them and their foster kids, don't let them have to try and figure it out.

- Give foster parents more say in respect to child's welfare.
- That they actually interact. They left me all alone to do everything myself until I started asking for help. Then they were just annoyed. Such a horrible experience for my family and I.
- Truly taking into account what is best for the child regardless of rules and regulations.
- I would change the way they dismiss the child's concerns about birth family. The department reunites children at all costs even if it's not in the child's best interest. I feel like health and welfare just push the children out of the system just eliminate tough or more work for themselves. I had a foster daughter who didn't want to speak or see her mother and had very valid reasons, the department did further damage in this scenario and caused great distress. I'm ashamed of the Idaho foster care system, in fact my daughter sat in foster care for 2.5 years before we were finally able to adopt her.
- Foster parents should have some say in the decisions made regarding children in their care and a safe way to make complaints that does not threaten the placement of foster children's placement.
- Asking them direct questions and engage with them at home visits
- To be more honest and forthright with the older foster kids. When they're not told the truth they have no trust in the system. They blew up with these people all their lives they know the patterns better than anyone. Stop enabling the parents to continue the behaviors that got their children taken. We have high expectations for these kids and none for the parents.
- That the foster parents were given more rights
- Every child is not a by the book case so there cannot be a by the book policy. A judge needs to be involved in every case to insure that the state is not just following policy, but actually looking to the best interest of the child. They currently have a good team with guardian ad litem and caseworker, but the state still gets the final say even when a guardian does not agree.
- try harder to keep that child with the parents
- Always have the best interest of the child in mind and treat the foster parents like people you have to understand I was a foster parent for 40 years and so some of these answers changed over the years wish the judges have more say
- Not give the parents so many chances. In Utah the parents have much less time to get their acts together, especially when the child is six years or under.
- Monthly case conference meetings with guardian ad litem foster parents school people and child's therapist or service provider. Visits to my home to see how I interact with the child. Actually consider foster parent an expert on the child they are dealing with 24/7 and consider they have a lot to bring to the table.
- Caseworkers would genuinely care for both foster family and child. Child's emotional safety and physical safety takes precedence over being reunited with their bio family.
- To take into consideration as what the child wants or needs. Also to see what would be in the child's best interest as far as long term not just short term, and whether the foster family is involved with the biological family or not. To also talk to the biological family to see if they are okay with where their children is placed at at the time.
- The one thing I would like changed above all else is that someone besides the foster parents look out for the best interest of the child.
- making sure that the case workers put their feelings aside and do what's best for the child. We had a case worker that didn't like us...she did what she could to not allow us to adopt our child. Our first case worker

was great, and approved of us. She was promoted and the one we were placed with after that didn't agree with our religious beliefs (we are Christians) and did everything she could to delay and slow the process down. She "lost" paper work etc.

- To visit more with the children and really see how happy they are in a good home.
- Actually care/act accordingly about their interests as long as those interests are beneficial to the child and their life.
- The easiest way to describe my issue with H&H is "common sense is not in charge". They have allowed policies & procedures to overshadow the humanity involved in real people's lives. They have complete control of decisions regarding placement with no checks & balances. There's no accountability. They're lack of respect for the biological parents has carried over to treating the foster families with the same disregard.
- Making sure that all the agencies described do what is 100% in the child's best interest!
- Better control of selection of H&W Team compatibility with Foster Family and Foster family advocate to help throughout process and battling the system.
- When paternal rights are terminated to place the child in the best home for THEM!
- I would change the priority the department places on birth parent's rights and shift the focus to the rights and well-being of the foster children.
- To come and visit the child more often and really see how they are doing. Also to put the child's best interest for long term care above anything else! Listen to the foster parents opinions!
- Support foster parents better.
- Look the child in the eye when explaining changes. That may reveal how these changes are affecting that child.
- Actually care about them,,, not just see it as a job!!
- Give more weight to what the Foster Parent and the Guardian Ad Litem recommendation.
- To get to know that child and observe the relationship that child has with the foster parents
- That the child came first and that they listen to families and allow foster families to speak for the child. There are too many times where they focus on removing a child and demanding that things go their way rather than working with the family or foster family.
- I would change how they treat the foster children . Also I would change how they disregard what's best for all the children in placement .
- Give foster parents the greater right over relatives to adopt once the foster child has been in their home for a certain amount of time.
- Following their own policies and meeting permanency within an acceptable timeframe.
- To listen more to the child as to their fears and concerns and where they wish to be placed. They need to treat the child more a person and less like a case number.