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# News and Notes

## Youth Alternatives Foster Care Program

### Statewide FFTA Treatment Foster Parent Survey Results

The Maine Chapter of the Foster Family Treatment Association (FFTA) conducted a survey of all current Specialized Foster Care licensed homes in the state of Maine in January 2004. The purpose of the study was to gauge foster parents' experience with the Levels of Care (LOC) system, to tabulate the LOC assessment outcomes for the foster children currently in their homes, and to assess the foster parents' future involvement in foster care services in light of the implementation of the LOC system. Youth Alternatives Foster Parents were offered an opportunity to participate in the survey as well as 13 other agencies. The report was written by Jeff Tiner, MSW, the TFC Director at Catholic Charities of Maine and Donald Hallcom, PhD, the Executive Director of Smart. The response rate was 57%, which is statistically

valid. 80% of the foster homes were two parent household, 19% were single parent household, and the remaining were alternative situations. 10% of correspondents reported no other income aside from their foster care stipend. 7% reported having a part-time income, followed by 61% who reported having one full time household income. The remaining 12% reported having two or more full time incomes in addition to their foster care stipend. 6% reported having less than a year of foster care experience, 19% reported 1-3 years of experience, 25% reported 4-6 years, 29% reported 7-10 years, 11% reported 10-15 years, and 9% reported more than 15 years of experience providing foster care. The report also included figures about the assessment of outcome for foster children. 65% had been assessed by March 15, 2004. The results were: 2.85%

were assessed at Level 1, at Level 3, 36.58% at Level 4 10.7% at Level 2, 36.07% and 13.76% at Level 5.

Foster parents were asked about their satisfaction with the process of establishing the level (the foster parent interview), and about their satisfaction with the outcome (the actual level determined.) 38% of parents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the foster parent interview. 22% reported being neutral, while 40% reported being unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with this process. Concerning the accuracy of the interview and the outcome of assessment, 36% report being satisfied or very satisfied, 16% reported being neutral and 48% reported being unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the Levels assessment outcome. Foster parents were asked about their anticipated future involvement with (Continued on page 3)

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Youth  
Alternatives, Inc.

Volume 1, Issue 7

July, 2004

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#### YA All Stars

- ☺ Everett S. made the honor roll.
- ☺ Russell H. received the most improved student award upon graduating from middle school
- ☺ Welcome to new foster parents: Blaine and Hannah, Tom and Lori, Carl and Mandy.
- ☺ Peter C. made the honor roll

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# Training Corner

## August Trainings

Please note that only the starred trainings (\*) are arranged through Youth Alternatives. If you are interested in non-starred items please contact Sarah Dowling (x251).

- 8/10 A Closer Look at Maintaining Professional Boundaries\* with Charles Applestein, MSW. 9-12  
Location: TBA No registration required for this training.
- 8/17 First Aid\* 9-12  
YA 2nd Floor Conf Room
- 8/17 CPR\* 1-4:30  
YA 2nd Floor Conf Room

The summer months are traditionally slow training months. Now is a great time to do at home trainings. You have a number of options:

The Child Welfare Training Institute has correspondence courses available. They can be mailed to you free of charge. They currently have 12 offerings. For more information visit their website at : [www.cwti.org/training/correspondance\\_course.htm](http://www.cwti.org/training/correspondance_course.htm) or contact them at toll-free 866-354-0084

YA has The Foster Parent Self Test Collection. The collection comes in a binder and includes twelve learning

areas with the attached self tests. To complete, one reads the material and answers the self test questions. The questions are returned to YA for scoring. Upon successful completion, a training certificate is issued for 1 hour for each self test. If you don't already have a binder, contact your case manager.

*Only asterisked (\*) trainings are available from Youth Alternatives. To sign up for a YA training contact Jessica Brakeley at [registration@youthalternatives.org](mailto:registration@youthalternatives.org) or call her at 874-1175 x110. For information about the other trainings, please contact your case manager.*

## New DHS Smoking Rules

DHS has announced their new licensing requirements concerning smoking in foster homes. The rules which take effect on July 10, 2004 are as followings:

Foster parents shall protect foster children from exposure to second hand tobacco smoke:

- Smoking is prohibited in a foster home when a foster child is in

placement.

- When a foster child is absent from the foster home, smoking is prohibited within 12 hours prior to their expected return.
- Smoking is prohibited in a foster home when a foster child is placed in a foster home providing respite care and within 12 hours prior to a child's expected respite placement.

- Smoking is prohibited in a foster parent's motor vehicle within 12 hours prior to transporting a foster child and when the foster child is present in the vehicle.

"Smoking includes carrying or having in one's possession a lighted cigarette, cigar, pip or other object giving off tobacco smoke."

## Direct Deposit is here!

In order to improve and increase their timeliness, the Finance Department at YA is requiring direct deposit for all foster care and respite payments. Stipends, clothing allowances and respite payments will be paid with direct deposit. Forms have been sent to all foster parents and respite providers to complete and return to YA. Direct deposits will begin with the July 10, 2004 check run. You will receive a remittance notice informing

you of the deposit. If you have not submitted your bank information on or before June 30, 2004, the Finance Department cannot guarantee that your funds will be in your account on 7/10/04. If you do not submit direct deposit information, you will not be paid!

Please make certain to notify the Finance Department if you move, or change your account. Without timely

notification, the Finance Department may not be able to pay you in a timely manner!



# Survey Results (continued from page 1)

treatment foster care services. 21% indicated they would continue to provide these services without seeking addition outside income. 37% indicated that they will continue providing foster care but will need to find work outside of their home to supplement their current income. 7% indicated they would only provide respite services in order to obtains addition income. 30 % reported that they will discontinue providing treatment foster care as a result of the LOC system. An addition 5% indicated that they too will discontinue providing treatment foster care, but cited reasons other than the LOC system.

In the final section of the survey, foster parents were asked to provide comments, suggestions and recommendations. Three themes emerged. An overwhelming majority of foster parents responding to this survey shared a sense of being de-valued as a result of the LOC system. Most of the comments were similar in expressing the notion that equating good work on the part of foster parents to lower reimbursement rates was a systemic disincentive.

Many foster parents shared their concern that if foster parents need to seek outside employment that the quality of treatment level foster care would decrease., Having to seek outside employment would be the deciding factor that would prevent many foster parents from continuing to provide foster care. Many parents expressed concerns about the assessment process. One was that those who did the Levels

assessment did not meet with the child. Other concerns were that the telephone interview did not provide an accurate assessment of the children's behaviors, risks and needs. This was especially true for foster parents with children under 5 years old. Another issue was the concern about the validity of the assessment in accurately determining the level of children whose behavioral challenges are cyclical in nature.

There were also a number of foster parents who indicated that the LOC process was fair, accurate and a necessary change in the system. Other made positive comments about the rationale for the LOC system. In addition there were a number of responses indicating that some LOC assessments were resulting in increased daily stipends.

There were three particular need areas that foster parents consistently identified:

- ⇒ The need for a comprehensive policy and accompanying resource for the provision of childcare for foster children in the LOC stipends require foster parents to seek addition employment.
- ⇒ Another need identified was for affordable health insurance for foster parents.
- ⇒ The last area identified was in transportation. With the impending stipend decreases, as well as the expected decrease in foster parent availability due to additional employment, transportation is needed to maintain compliance with the foster children's treatment and reunification plans.

Other suggestions were factoring foster

parent experience and training participation into the daily stipend rate, amending the licensing rules regarding room requirements in order to accommodate larger siblings groups, and making the LOC rate be retroactive to the date the child was placed in the home.

The writers hope that the report will inform people about the experiences of foster parents. They recommend that the feedback and suggestions contained in the report should warrant consideration. They note that the Department of Human Services and all agencies involved in foster care are in an extraordinarily challenging period requiring the balancing of competing needs and fiscal realities.

The writers indicated that given the ongoing and historic challenges of foster parent recruitment and retention in the state of Maine, the responses from this report are alarming. They note that if only half of the foster parents who indicated the intention to exit the system in the coming year do so, it would be a significant crisis for the foster care system. It would create not only a shortage of available home for children in need, but also a severe shortage of qualified and experienced treatment homes. The writers end the report by stating their hope that DHS , provider agencies, and foster parents move forward in a collaborative manner in order to best meet the needs of the children and families served.



## Mileage Reimbursement is Here!

As of July 1, 2004, YA foster parents may be reimbursed for mileage. The mileage rate is 32 cents per mile. You may also be reimbursed for tolls. The types of appointments for which travel is reimbursable are any doctor or any type of therapy. This includes family doctors, specialists, optometrists, chiropractors, psychotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists and developmental therapists. *You may receive mileage for any appointment that is MaineCare reimbursable.* Travel to supervised visits is also reimbursable.

Some travel does not qualify for mileage reimbursement. This includes treatment team meetings, transportation to school or school events, travel to YA for meetings, and trainings. Attached to the newsletter are 2 travel report forms. You may get

more from your case manager. Please fill these out completely. It is very important that under client name you put your foster child's initials. You must have the toll receipts to be reimbursed for tolls, and they must be attached to the travel report. These forms are due by 14th and last day of each month. If the 14th or last day of the month falls on a Saturday then the forms are due the Friday before. If the 14th or last day the month falls on a Sunday then they are due the subsequent Monday. Checks are mailed on the 10th and 25th of each month. You have 30 days from the travel



date to submit the reimbursement request. *Requests over 30 days will not be paid.* **Travel Report forms should be submitted to your case manager. Do not submit them directly to the Business Office.** Speak with your Case Manager about arranging to receive these forms. Aside from mailing or delivering the Reports, you may also E-mail them to your case manager. Ask your Case manager about getting a disk copy of the Travel Report. Case managers need to attach the Travel Reports to check request forms and have them signed before submitting them to the business office. When you are paid depends on when your case manager receives them! If you have any questions please speak to your case manager or to Anne Archibald.

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