

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH
AND FAMILIES**

**FOSTER FAMILY CARE
PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2001**

To The Fiscal Committee Of The General Court:

We have conducted an audit of the Department of Health and Human Services, Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), Foster Family Care system to address the recommendation made to you by the joint Legislative Performance Audit and Oversight Committee. We conducted our audit in accordance with the standards applicable to performance audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions. Accordingly, we have performed such procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

The purpose of our audit was to assess and evaluate: 1) the effectiveness of the State's foster care system, 2) the foster parent recruiting process, 3) pre-service and in-service training, 4) the process for ensuring the rights of foster parents, 5) on-going support for foster parents from the DCYF, and 6) the current status of the foster care observations noted in our 1993 performance audit report of the Child Settlement Program. The audit period includes the eight years from FY 1993 through FY 2000.

This report is our evaluation of the information noted above and is intended solely for the information of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Fiscal Committee of the General Court. This restriction is not intended to limit the distribution of this report, which upon acceptance by the Fiscal Committee is a matter of public record.

Office Of Legislative Budget Assistant

Office Of Legislative Budget Assistant

September 2001

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	US Administration For Children And Families
AFCARS	Adoption And Foster Care Analysis And Reporting System
ASFA	Public Law 105-89, The Adoption And Safe Families Act Of 1997
BQI	NH DCYF Bureau Of Quality Improvement
CFR	Code Of Federal Regulations
CHINS	Children In Need Of Services
CIS	Children's Information System
CLL	College For Lifelong Learning
CPA	Child Placing Agency
CPSW	Child Protective Service Worker
DCYS	NH Division For Children And Youth Services
DCYF	NH Division For Children, Youth And Families
DHHS	NH Department Of Health And Human Services
FY	State Fiscal Year
IP	Individualized Placement
ISO	Individual Service Option
JPO	Juvenile Probation And Parole Officer
NHFAPA	NH Foster And Adoptive Parent Association
PD	NH DCYF Policy Directive
PIC	Provisional Interim Care
RFP	Request For Proposal
SACWIS	Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System
SSA	Social Security Act
TANF	Temporary Assistance For Needy Families
TFC	Therapeutic Foster Care
USDA	United States Department Of Agriculture

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
FOSTER FAMILY CARE**

SUMMARY

Purpose And Scope Of Audit

This audit was performed at the request of the Fiscal Committee of the General Court consistent with a recommendation from the joint Legislative Performance Audit and Oversight Committee. Our audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. The purpose of our audit was to assess: 1) the effectiveness of the State's foster care system, 2) the foster parent recruiting process, 3) pre-service and in-service training, 4) the process for ensuring the rights of foster parents, 5) on-going support for foster parents from the DCYF, and 6) the current status of the foster care observations noted in our 1993 performance audit report of the Child Settlement Program. The audit period includes the eight years from FY 1993 through FY 2000.

Background

RSA 161:2, II, authorizes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to be responsible for the development and administration of child welfare including services and care of children in foster homes. RSA 161:2, IV, authorizes the department to supervise foster family homes and child placing agencies, and requires rules be adopted to ensure children are placed in a wholesome living environment.

The Bureau of Children, Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) is responsible for providing services to children in foster family home placements. The division carries out its responsibilities through its central office located in Concord and 12 district offices located throughout the State.

Results In Brief

We noted 29 observations and recommendations regarding the foster family care system. Eleven observations concern recruitment, retention, matching, training, and licensing issues. Seven observations and recommendations address support of foster family parents. Eleven observations concern the program's management, the last of which recommends the department report to the Legislature on division improvements in determining the foster family care program's efficiency and improving the program's effectiveness.

Results In Brief (Continued)

Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, Matching, Training, And Licensing Need Improvement

We found that the foster family care system's recruitment and retention efforts are insufficient to provide and maintain a varied pool of trained, licensed foster parents to appropriately match with the needs of each foster child. Pre-service training has improved yet needs more improvement. We also found DCYF licensing issues in the following areas: statutory and administrative licensing requirements unmet, rules inconsistently maintained, requirements were unenforceable, and children in placement in unlicensed and unpermitted homes.

Foster Parent Support Needs Improvement

We found that, although required by statute, the DCYF did not have foster family home compensation rules, nor did the DCYF rate setter consult with the DHHS advisory board. We also found that the DCYF needs to improve its reimbursement of foster care expenses, as well as the timeliness and accuracy of reimbursement payments. We also report that the DCYF needs to improve: making monthly in-home visits to foster children, responsiveness to foster parents, and after business hours and weekend emergency support.

Foster Care System Management Needs Improvement

DHHS and DCYF management are responsible for overseeing the foster family care system and its operations. We found that management needs to improve: statutory compliance; measuring, evaluating, and monitoring program performance and services including operations and finances; overseeing therapeutic level foster care; and controls over the foster care system including operations and resources.

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
FOSTER FAMILY CARE**

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

OBSERVATION NUMBER	PAGE	LEGISLATIVE ACTION REQUIRED	RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY RESPONSE
1	22	NO	Develop and implement a statewide foster family recruitment and retention plan.	Do Not Concur
2	27	NO	Evaluate, report on, and work to resolve common district office foster parent retention issues. Conduct exit surveys.	Concur In Part
3	32	NO	Gather baseline and ongoing information regarding inappropriate placements. Improve assessment efforts. Develop and enforce uniform policies and procedures regarding matching procedures.	Concur In Part
4	35	NO	Develop feedback process to evaluate DCYF pre-service training. Standardize DCYF orientation and regulatory modules.	Concur In Part

Recommendation Summary (Continued)

OBSERVATION NUMBER	PAGE	LEGISLATIVE ACTION REQUIRED	RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY RESPONSE
5	42	NO	Amend licensing rules to meet the requirements in State law for homes specifically licensed for CHINS and delinquent youth. Recruit and train foster parents to serve CHINS and delinquents.	Concur In Part
6	45	NO	Maintain foster care licensing rules as required by RSA 541-A.	Concur In Part
7	47	NO	Comply with RSAs 170-E and 541-A and maintain notice, appeal, hearing, and rehearing rules.	Concur In Part
8	48	NO	Comply with licensing standards set forth in State and federal law as well as DHHS rules.	Concur In Part
9	52	NO	Re-evaluate which state, national, and local criminal record searches can and should be required for foster family care. Amend rules as necessary.	Concur In Part
10	53	NO	License and permit homes according to established standards.	Concur In Part

Recommendation Summary (Continued)

OBSERVATION NUMBER	PAGE	LEGISLATIVE ACTION REQUIRED	RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY RESPONSE
11	56	NO	Place foster children according to State law and administrative rule. Ensure foster homes receiving reimbursement payments are compliant with certification for payment standards.	Concur In Part
12	62	NO	Promulgate rate setting rules regarding compensation to foster family homes and annually review rates as statutorily required.	Concur In Part
13	63	YES	Reevaluate the statutory requirement for rate setter consultation with the DHHS advisory board.	Concur
14	63	NO	Promulgate rules for reimbursement to foster family care providers. Determine current, adequate foster care reimbursement rates.	Concur In Part
15	67	NO	Adopt and implement policies and procedures addressing the payment process, customer service criteria for timeliness of payments, and timely correction of erroneous payments. Revise foster parent handbook and pre-service training curriculum.	Concur In Part

Recommendation Summary (Continued)

OBSERVATION NUMBER	PAGE	LEGISLATIVE ACTION REQUIRED	RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY RESPONSE
16	72	NO	Make required monthly in-home visits.	Concur In Part
17	73	NO	Establish and uphold a statewide standard for foster parents to receive return telephone calls from DCYF staff. Streamline foster parent emergency contact protocols.	Concur In Part
18	77	NO	Establish and uphold a statewide standard for returning after-hours telephone calls. Establish a mechanism for foster family parent 24-hour emergency contact with a district office staff representative.	Concur In Part
19	81	NO	Promulgate rules to govern child placing agencies in accordance with RSA 170-E and RSA 541-A. Promulgate rules to establish an adequate rate of reimbursement for facilities providing certified child care and services in accordance with RSAs 170:G and 541-A, and review rates annually. Maintain certification for payment standards rules as required by RSA 541-A.	Concur In Part

Recommendation Summary (Continued)

OBSERVATION NUMBER	PAGE	LEGISLATIVE ACTION REQUIRED	RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY RESPONSE
20	85	NO	Amend He-C 6446 to reflect departmental practice and to comply with statutory requirements for administrative rules. Include additional statutory requirements in rules.	Concur In Part
21	89	NO	Ensure management and their information systems are able to accurately and fully track essential data and produce needed reports to allow and document adequate program oversight.	Concur In Part
22	91	NO	Implement and administer an automated case management system that complies with federal and State requirements and meets the needs of the State's children and youth.	Concur In Part
23	97	NO	Develop and maintain a comprehensive, integrated management information system.	Concur In Part
24	100	NO	Comply with State contracting practice.	Concur In Part

Recommendation Summary (Continued)

OBSERVATION NUMBER	PAGE	LEGISLATIVE ACTION REQUIRED	RECOMMENDATION	AGENCY RESPONSE
25	105	NO	Adhere to the administrative rules governing ISO placements and change them if necessary.	Do Not Concur
26	107	NO	Overhaul the therapeutic level foster care system.	Concur In Part
∞ 27	111	NO	The DCYF should conduct a workload analysis and determine workload and caseload standards. Adopt administrative rules governing the workload formula, duties, and standards for JPPOs as required by statute.	Concur In Part
28	113	NO	Ensure sufficient oversight of State office and district office personnel. Ensure staff pre-service training requirements are met.	Concur In Part
29	118	NO	Improve management control over the foster family care system.	Concur In Part

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
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DIVISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
FOSTER FAMILY CARE**

INTRODUCTORY SECTION

In November 1998, the joint Fiscal Committee of the General Court approved a recommendation by the joint Legislative Performance Audit and Oversight Committee for a performance audit of New Hampshire's foster care system. We began audit planning in late July 1999.

1.1 Overview

RSA 161:2, II, authorizes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop and administer State responsibilities for child welfare, including services and care of children in foster homes. RSA 161:2, IV, requires the DHHS to supervise all foster family homes and licensing agencies, and requires the Commissioner to adopt rules ensuring foster homes provide children a wholesome living environment. Within the DHHS, the Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) has responsibility for services to children in foster placements.

Children may enter foster care in a number of ways.

- RSA 169-C allows courts to transfer legal custody of children found to be abused or neglected to a child placing agency. These children may then be placed in an appropriate foster home. The DCYF reported that the majority of children in foster homes were abuse or neglect cases.
- RSA 169-B outlines the delinquency process that allows a court to place a youth in a foster home specifically licensed to accept delinquent children.
- RSA 169-D specifies that when the court finds that a child is in need of services (CHINS), it may order the child placed into a foster home specifically licensed to accept CHINS.
- The agreement between the DHHS, the Department of Youth Development Services, and the Juvenile Parole Board provides that under certain circumstances under court order, minors released from the Youth Development Center or from the Youth Detention Services Unit within the Department of Youth Development Services may also be placed directly into a foster home.

Residential placement options range from placement in a relative's home to intensive care group facilities. Within this range, foster family homes provide basic general care through therapeutic level foster care intended to meet varied clinical needs. The DCYF is responsible for recruiting, training, licensing, reimbursing, monitoring, and retaining its foster family homes. The DCYF is also responsible for licensing and monitoring child placing agencies which are private entities that place children into foster family homes the agencies themselves recruit, train, and oversee. According to the DCYF, during FY 2000, between 700 and 800 foster homes served between 1,700 and 1,800 children. Foster family home applicants must demonstrate the ability to: 1) provide a safe, stable family

1.1 Overview (Continued)

environment; 2) ensure each child's physical, health, and educational needs are met; 3) ensure adequate supervision; 4) participate in case planning and implementing resultant responsibilities; 5) conduct record keeping and reporting status changes; and 6) accept the likelihood the foster child placement is temporary. Furthermore, foster family homes are allowed to administer constructive discipline; they are prohibited from disciplining foster children with corporal punishment.

As detailed on page 11, Table 1 shows that for the eight-year period from fiscal years 1993 through 2000, DCYF reports foster family care costs of approximately \$100 million. Foster family care costs have increased by 228% in those eight years, from \$6.3 million in fiscal year 1993 to \$20.7 million in fiscal year 2000. The costs to provide services for children in foster family care are borne by State, county, and federal sources. Federal funding related to foster care has also increased significantly over the eight-year audit period. While the DCYF does not specifically account for federal funding related to foster family care, it does report that in fiscal year 1993, federal dollars covered approximately ten percent of out-of-home placement costs; in fiscal year 2000, approximately 40 percent of those costs were recovered through federal reimbursement. The remaining 60 percent of the costs are allocated to the State and counties with the State covering 75 percent.

To carry out its child welfare duties, the DCYF employs: field staff consisting of child protection service workers, juvenile probation and parole officers, and supervisors; administrative support personnel; and management personnel. The DCYF operates a State-wide case management system, known as BRIDGES, to support the work of its field staff and management. Also, private and public entities provide various services and placements integral to the foster care program, including therapeutic level foster care, recruitment and retention support to foster parents, foster parent and staff training, administrative review, and ancillary services.

1.2 Scope, Objectives, And Methodology

This audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. The audit period for this performance audit includes the eight years from FY 1993 through FY 2000. The audit period for our 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit ended June 30, 1992, providing a convenient starting point for this audit.

Scope And Objectives

During our initial meeting with the agency, personnel from the DCYF reported that all out-of-home placements were considered to be foster care. At the meeting we reported that the audit would focus on foster family care, that is children placed in family settings with one or two parents present in the home. We also informed the agency that we would not be looking at the reasons the court decides to place children into foster care.

Table 1

DCYF Foster Family Care Expenses, FY 1993 – FY 2000

	State Fiscal Year								Total
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	
Foster Home Board and Care Reimbursement									
General Foster Home ¹	\$2,839,660	\$3,362,998	\$3,472,178	\$3,355,364	\$3,721,411	\$3,912,199	\$2,340,012	\$2,213,363	\$25,217,185
Specialized Foster Home ¹							1,921,717	2,281,540	4,203,257
Subtotal - General/Specialized	2,839,660	3,362,998	3,472,178	3,355,364	3,721,411	3,912,199	4,261,729	4,494,903	29,420,442
Therapeutic Foster Care ²	297,891	505,971	930,802	1,514,841	1,553,049	1,785,301	2,006,098	2,152,448	10,746,401
Individual Service Option ²				92,000	746,642	2,017,359	2,081,316	4,595,067	9,532,384
Individual Placement ²	109,589	173,620	238,321	435,293	487,656	405,850	708,797	823,388	3,382,514
Emergency Home	13,280	8,871	18,932	5,386	7,467	4,963	11,180	7,455	77,534
Crisis Home	50,550	42,900	37,500	31,050	32,850	23,550	24,150	9,755	252,305
Crisis Placement	11,110	10,860	13,299	8,709	14,920	10,655	8,927	22,500	100,980
Relative Home	43,799	49,963	46,352	38,501	30,346	21,126	26,643	42,363	299,093
Subtotal - Foster Homes	3,365,879	4,155,183	4,757,384	5,481,144	6,594,341	8,181,003	9,128,840	12,147,879	53,811,653
Ancillary Services									
Supplemental Foster Care	223,519	241,881	263,541	354,741	591,122	742,871	879,252	799,583	4,096,510
Respite Care	92,023	90,137	134,701	114,743	116,745	124,069	153,466	153,875	979,759
Foster Care Health Support							170,756	69,170	239,926
Transportation	131,478	383,934	560,895	243,967	231,021	314,994	351,983	363,348	2,581,620
Subtotal - Ancillary Services	447,020	715,952	959,137	713,451	938,888	1,181,934	1,555,457	1,385,976	7,897,815
Administration ³									
DCYF Administration	2,122,591	2,711,698	3,182,313	3,448,451	4,193,651	5,212,226	5,947,810	6,090,083	32,908,823
Non-DCYF Administration	371,426	474,512	556,863	603,434	733,834	912,071	1,040,789	1,065,685	5,758,614
Subtotal - Administration	2,494,017	3,186,210	3,739,176	4,051,885	4,927,485	6,124,297	6,988,599	7,155,768	38,667,437
Total ³	\$6,306,916	\$8,057,345	\$9,455,697	\$10,246,480	\$12,460,714	\$15,487,234	\$17,672,896	\$20,689,623	\$100,376,905

Notes:

¹ General foster home includes general & specialized until FY 1999

² Includes services for children

³ Estimated administration costs based on data provided by DCYF for FY 2000

Source: LBA analysis of information provided by DCYF

1.2 Scope, Objectives, And Methodology (Continued)

The objectives of this performance audit were to assess and evaluate:

- the effectiveness of the State's foster care system;
- the foster parent recruitment process;
- foster parent pre-service and in-service training;
- the process for ensuring the rights of foster parents;
- on-going support of foster parents from the DCYF; and
- the current status of foster care observations noted in our 1993 performance audit of the Child Settlement Program.

Methodology

To obtain background information and develop an understanding of the State's foster care system we reviewed State statutes and statements of appropriation, DCYF-supplied programmatic and financial documents, and federal laws and other federal foster care-related documents. We also conducted background interviews with:

- the legislator who initially requested the topic;
- numerous, knowledgeable DHHS staff, including the DCYF central office and field staff;
- personnel from the University System of New Hampshire, College for Lifelong Learning staff, and the president of the New Hampshire Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (NHFAPA).

We used the following methods to address the audit issues:

- structured interviews with DCYF personnel at the central and district offices;
- structured interviews with State and local fire safety personnel;
- structured interviews with personnel from private child placing agencies and the president of the NHFAPA;
- reviews and analyses of DCYF documents related to: quality reviews of district office operations, district office recruitment and retention plans, Eric L. compliance, licensing information, contracting information, policies and procedures, administrative rules, and the BRIDGES management information system;
- review and analysis of all Eric L. panel reports issued during the audit period;
- reviews and analyses of federal compliance reports and audits;
- reviews of foster care files in two DCYF district offices; and
- mail surveys of statistically significant samples of the populations of current and former DCYF foster parents (Appendices A and C), current and former private child placing agency foster parents (Appendices B and D), and DCYF child protective service workers and juvenile probation and parole officers (JPPOs) (Appendix E).

1.3 DCYF Organization

The DCYF recruits, licenses, trains, and supports foster parents through its child protection and juvenile services units (see Figure 1, pg. 14). Other units providing support to the foster care system include MIS/BRIDGES, bureau of quality improvement, business administration, legal counsel, independent living, the Eric L. monitor, and staff development. The DCYF also provides support through contracts with private child placing agencies and other entities. A director and an assistant director supervise the division.

Child Protection Unit

The child protection unit bears the main responsibility of managing the State's foster care system. The unit is supervised by a child protection administrator, with staff located in 12 district offices throughout the State in: Berlin, Claremont, Concord, Conway, Keene, Laconia, Littleton, Manchester, Nashua, Portsmouth, Rochester, and Salem. Child protection field staff provide assessments of alleged child abuse or neglect, and family services to children who have been found to be abused or neglected and their families. Each district office is staffed with foster family care-related personnel including one or two child protective services supervisors, a foster care licensing worker, child protective service workers (CPSWs), and support staff.

Juvenile Services Unit

The juvenile services unit manages the cases of CHINS and delinquents in foster care, including those who have been released from secure settings operated by the Department of Youth Development Services. Foster family placements made by juvenile services field staff are reportedly managed in the same way as are placements made by CPSWs. According to DCYF management, the number of youths under the supervision of the juvenile services unit is under ten percent of the total foster family care population.

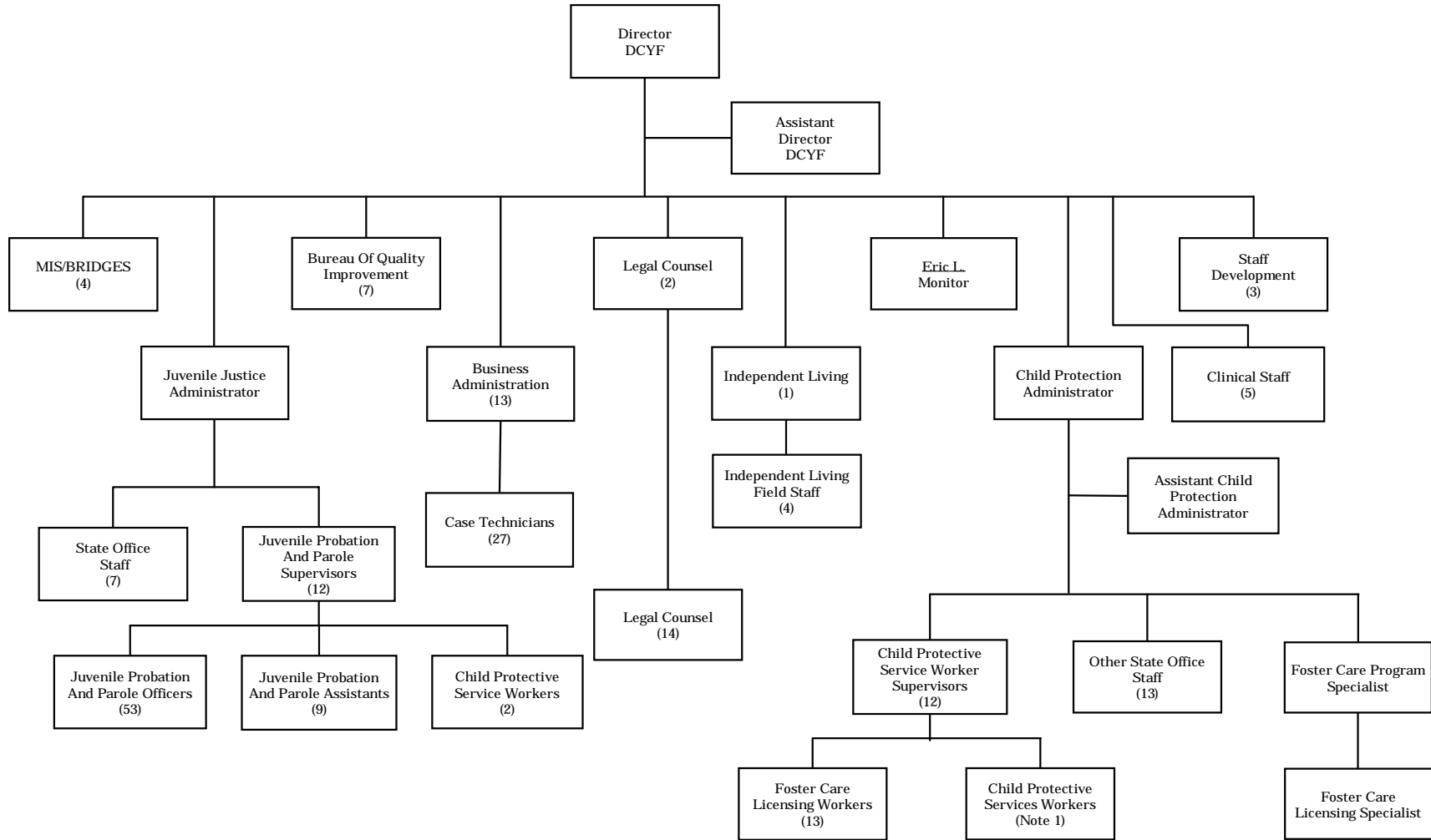
The juvenile services unit is supervised by a juvenile justice administrator. There are seven additional support staff located in the central office. Field services are provided by juvenile services supervisors, JPPOs, juvenile probation and parole assistants, CPSWs, and support staff. Juvenile services field staff operated from field offices located throughout the state.

MIS/BRIDGES

Until 1997, the DCYF used a child welfare payment system known as the Children's Information System (CIS), for child welfare claims processing. In that year, a replacement system, called New Hampshire BRIDGES (BRIDGES) was implemented. Among other functions, BRIDGES is intended to 1) handle claims payments formerly managed by CIS, and 2) automate case management functions such as licensing and documenting foster family home visits. Historically, case management related data have been manually administered. State law requires the DCYF and the DHHS to administer an automated case management system which addresses the needs of the State's children and youth and complies with federal and State system development requirements.

Figure 1

**Division For Children, Youth And Families
Foster Care-Related Organization As Of June 30, 2000**



14

Note 1: There are 95 family services child protective service workers dealing directly with the foster care program.
Source: LBA analysis of DCYF information.

1.3 DCYF Organization (Continued)

Bureau Of Quality Improvement (BQI)

BQI staff provide the DCYF with reviews of internal functioning such as district office assessments. It also provides monitoring, consultation, technical assistance, and enforcement of agency standards.

Business Administration

Business administration is responsible for fiscal management of the DCYF. One aspect of fiscal management is Field Program Eligibility. Program Eligibility staff is comprised of case technicians located throughout the state in the district offices. The DCYF case technicians are responsible to ensure that all potential sources of federal reimbursement are secured and ensure that payments for services are from the correct fund code accounts. They also review the child and family's financial circumstances to determine potential eligibility for Social Security Act and Supplemental Security Income benefits for children in DCYF care.

Business administration also oversees provider contracting and payment, administers rate setting, and manages provider (including foster parent) payment-related inquiries.

Legal Counsel

DCYF legal staff provide legal support to the division on a wide range of issues from representing the division in legal proceedings to facilitating administrative rule development.

Independent Living

The NH Teen Independent Living Program is a federally subsidized program designed to enable youth that exit foster care to become independent adults. Services may be provided by the DCYF Independent Living Coordinators to all youth between the ages of 16 and 21 who are in out-of-home placements and are likely to remain in foster care until they have completed their high school educations. Services include independent living skills assessment, needs assessment, career assessment, and aptitude testing. In addition, referrals are made by the Independent Living Coordinators for youth for vocation training, education and life skills training. The program is coordinated by an Independent Living Program Specialist and provided by four DCYF field staff covering the 12 district offices.

Staff Development

The staff development unit is responsible for professional development of DCYF staff and it works in partnership with the University of New Hampshire, the North American Family Institute North, and the College for Lifelong Learning (CLL) to provide ongoing training for DCYF and private child placing agency foster parents and DCYF staff.

1.4 The Eric L. Settlement Agreement

The Eric L. agreement, effective from September 1, 1997 through September 1, 2002, settled a class action suit against the DCYF filed on behalf of children referred to the agency. The agreement's purpose is to:

Develop and implement processes intended by the Parties to promote the health, safety and well-being of children referred to DCYF pursuant to the Child Protection Act (RSA 169-C) by providing suitable training and supervision of Child Protection Service Workers (CPSWs) and Supervisors, timely assessment of reports of abuse and neglect, appropriate intervention with children and families to remedy identified problems, regular monitoring of children placed in the legal custody of DCYF, prompt development and implementation of permanency plans for children unable to return to their families and support and training for foster parents.

The settlement agreement requires the DCYF, among other things, to:

- supervise district office personnel conducting foster care recruitment and matching;
- have each district office develop an annual foster care recruiting and retention plan;
- hire a consultant to review and recommend improvements to DCYF foster home recruitment and retention practices;
- develop a comprehensive and unified foster parent pre-service training curriculum;
- produce and distribute to all foster parents a handbook or pamphlet containing the duties and rights of foster parents and the DCYF;
- permit various mechanisms for foster parents to comply with in-service training requirements;
- meet requirements related to worker and supervisor training;
- notify foster parents and others, at least ten days prior to scheduled administrative reviews, of the site and time of the review;
- have monthly in-home visits by CPSWs responsible for cases involving children placed in in-state foster care; and
- apply specified funds to various activities.

1.5 Federal Laws And Regulations

Federal government programs relating to foster children are chiefly addressed within Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act (SSA). States also may provide some foster care services under the SSA's Title XX, Social Services Block Grant. Titles IV-B and IV-E are intended to work together to avoid out-of-home child placements, and to impart to affected children protections and permanent placements. Title IV-B is the funding authority for states for a number of child welfare services comprising family preservation and family support. Title IV-E specifically authorizes foster care and other programs. Title XX is a capped entitlement block grant program whose funding assists states in providing, among other activities, foster care services.

1.5 Federal Laws And Regulations (continued)

Title IV-B

Title IV-B, subpart 1, Child Welfare Service Program, is the federal authorization for 75 percent matching grants to states with various child welfare services, including assuring adequate foster care for children who can neither return home nor be placed for adoption. State eligibility is dependent on numerous requirements including an approved plan, an annual interim review of plan progress, an annual financial report, a summary report on the State's performance under its FY 1994-1999 plan, and a five-year plan submitted in FY 2000.

Title IV-B, subpart 2, originally known as Family Preservation Programs, sustained family preservation and support services. In November 1997, Public Law 105-89, the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) reauthorized and renamed Title IV-B, subpart 2, Promoting Safe and Stable Families. Family preservation services are for families and children at risk or in crisis, to include parents and other caregivers such as foster parents. Family support services can be community-based, comprise time-limited reunification services, promote child and family well-being and safety, and increase the strength and stability of families including foster families. The ASFA defines time-limited reunification services as activities provided during a 15-month window commencing when each child enters foster care. Examples include counseling, temporary child care and therapeutic family services, and transportation.

To receive grants under Title IV-B, subpart 2, states must have an approved state plan which provides for "diligent recruitment" of potential foster and adoptive families reflecting the ethnic and racial diversity of children needing foster and adoptive homes. Under ASFA, each state plan must also provide assurance that the state has a case review system for its foster care children.

Title IV-E

Title IV-E of the SSA, Federal Payments for Foster Care and Adoption Assistance, is a permanent entitlement program which provides matching funds to states for: 1) maintenance payments made for Aid to Families with Dependent Children-eligible children in foster care family homes, 2) child placement services, and 3) administrative costs. Matching rates vary according to programs and services offered by the states. Additionally, due to welfare reform within Public Law 104-193 which took effect in 1996, Aid to Families with Dependent Children was repealed and replaced with the TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) block grant system. States enrolled in TANF must certify that they will operate a Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Program under Title IV-E. States participating in the Title IV-E foster care program must meet certain requirements, including having a plan that requires case planning and the periodic reviews of foster care licensing standards and the amount paid for foster care maintenance.

1.5 Federal Laws And Regulations (Continued)

Data Collection Requirements

Federal rule (45 CFR §1355.40) requires each state administering titles IV-B and IV-E to implement a data collection system by October 1, 1994. Rules establish foster care reporting requirements, including data content and timeliness, and provide for semi-annual penalties for substantial noncompliance. States were allowed three penalty-free years beginning on October 1, 1994, and a one half-penalty year beginning October 1, 1997. Noncompliance in subsequent years results in a full annual penalty of 20 percent of various federal funds.

Federal reimbursement for a statewide automated child welfare information system (SACWIS) is authorized under section 474(a)(3)(c) of the SSA. Associated rules require states to submit an advance planning document to receive federal funds. Under the advance planning document, states must have a SACWIS designed to provide automated procedures and processes supporting effective management, tracking, and reporting. Also, the developed SACWIS must meet reporting requirements for the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), as well as perform case file review quality and assurance functions.

Title XX

The Title XX Social Services Block Grant program requires states to report annually on services supported by federal funds, and audit the fund expenditures not less than every two years. Services may include foster care, transportation, and child care. Administration, long- and short-term training and retraining, conferences, and workshops may be funded through Title XX.

1.6 Significant Achievements

It is important to recognize that performance auditing by its nature is a critical process, designed to identify problems or weaknesses in past and existing practices and procedures. We mention here a number of successful and positive practices and programs that we observed and for which sufficient documentation was available.

Policies And Procedures

The DCYF reports that policies and procedures were put online in 1999, streamlining their release and access for personnel. In addition, the DCYF created a group called the Foster Care Forum in 1996, which worked to replace four outdated policies and procedures: 1) Placement Options, 2) Pre-placement Preparation, 3) Transitions, and 4) Kinship Care. The Case Plan has also transitioned from a typewritten form to a computer-based template.

Foster Parent Training

The DCYF has made significant improvements in its foster parent pre-service training program. As we discuss in Section 2 of our report, the current pre-service training program,

1.6 Significant Achievements (Continued)

known as Foundations for Fostering, has evolved from the Nova University-developed program we reported on in our 1993 Child Settlement Program audit report.

In 1997, the DCYF contracted with the CLL to develop a training curriculum and provide in-service instruction to foster parents. The current training program was developed with input from foster parents, the DCYF, and the CLL. Currently, general foster home parents must attend eight hours of in-service training per year, while specialized foster home parents must receive 16 training hours and therapeutic foster home parents must receive 24 hours of training each year. Classes offering continuing education credits were designed around 31 foster parent competencies. The number of classes offered has increased each year, with 157 projected for the 2000 contract year and 217 projected for the 2001 contract year. Any group of five or more foster parents may request training from CLL in a specific area and expect that a trainer and convenient training site will be arranged to meet their request.

Health Care For Children

The DCYF, in collaboration with Child and Family Services of Manchester and Child Health Services began the New Hampshire Foster Health Care Project in 1993 at the Manchester district office. The project assures that children entering foster care have early identification of medical/mental health issues and treatment. After initially expanding the project to the Keene and Claremont district offices, the DCYF began expanding the program statewide in 2000.

Through the project, a registered nurse assists the CPSW to obtain a child's health history from the birth family. Working with the birth and foster families, the nurse locates a primary care physician for the child and makes necessary medical appointments. The nurse follows the child's care, keeps a record of the child's health history, and provides copies to both the birth and foster families. When the child leaves the foster care system, the health history is given to the child's caretaker and the primary care physician.

Partnering With Foster Families

The DCYF has participated in a number of joint initiatives with foster families such as developing the Foundation for Fostering training program and the health care project. The federal ASFA requires that foster families have an opportunity to participate in court proceedings that involve their foster children. The DCYF and the NHFAPA have been active in ensuring this requirement is carried out throughout the State.

The DCYF director and the NHFAPA meet regularly and the director has met with each foster parent group in the State. NHFAPA members sit on various DCYF committees, including those which have worked on administrative rules, supplemental foster care policies, and foster care licensing. The DCYF and foster parents also jointly created a foster parent resource handbook.

1.6 Significant Achievements (Continued)

Foster parents have been asked to participate in the review of RFPs including the RFP to support the statewide activities of foster parents, recruitment and retention planning, and therapeutic foster care contract reviews.

The DCYF contracts for foster parent support and technical assistance to develop “support groups” or local associations, provides staff to the NHFAPA and assists the NHFAPA in the operation of the foster allegation support team, FIRST. This contract also assists foster parents to plan and conduct a statewide training conference, attend regional and national conferences, and provides foster parent scholarships for the annual DCYF conference.

Support Services

Stipends for child care for foster parents who attend DCYF or CLL sponsored training, the NHFAPA conference, and regional or national conferences are available through the staff development unit and a contract.

During the audit period, the DCYF began planning for providing special occasion allowances for children in care.

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
FOSTER FAMILY CARE**

**FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, MATCHING,
TRAINING, AND LICENSING**

Part of the DCYF's responsibility in overseeing the foster family care system is to ensure that there are sufficient foster parents to match with the varied needs of foster children. Ongoing DCYF recruitment efforts are essential to replenish and increase the available numbers and types of foster parents. Successful retention helps the State maintain its valuable investment in a reliable and trained cadre of foster parents, and can offset recruitment and matching pressures. By appropriately matching the abilities and expectations of foster parents with the unique needs of each child, the DCYF enhances the probability that children will succeed in placements, and that foster parents will want to continue serving children.

The DCYF reports that training is a cornerstone of support for prospective and current foster parents, and it is required by foster care licensing rules. Pre-service training serves prospective providers, and in-service training develops and advances proficiencies in licensed foster parents. Both pre-service and in-service training are required for licensing. In 1997, the DCYF contracted with the CLL to identify core competencies and develop skill building training modules.

Foster parent licensing is statutorily required, and regulates the placement of children into State-approved homes with qualified foster parents. Children must be placed with duly licensed foster care providers for the State to be eligible for federal funding, including foster care reimbursements. Additionally, certification for payment standards require that foster family care providers be licensed to be eligible for payments.

Our analysis indicates that the DCYF lacks a statewide foster parent recruitment and retention plan; needs retention, matching, and pre-service training improvements; and experiences numerous licensing issues.

2.1 Recruitment

Foster family care providers enter and leave the foster care system, as do foster children. Fruitful, sustained recruitment efforts are essential to replenish and increase the available numbers and types of foster parents to match the needs of the foster child populations from each district office. Each DCYF district office's foster care licensing worker recruits locally, and partners with local foster parents and foster parent organizations. Also, the Eric L. settlement required each district office to assemble annually a team to develop a district recruiting and retention plan, starting on or before January 1998. Our review of these plans for the periods 1998 through 2000, as well as interviews with DCYF personnel, revealed that each district office had insufficient numbers and types of foster parents to meet the diverse needs of the system's foster children. We found no overarching State recruitment plan that directed and integrated the independent district office plans. Our 1993 Child

2.1 Recruitment (Continued)

Settlement Program performance audit report also expressed concerns with foster parent recruitment.

Observation No. 1

The DCYF Needs To Develop And Implement An Adequate Statewide Foster Family Recruitment And Retention Plan

The DCYF has failed to develop and implement an adequate statewide foster family recruitment and retention plan. Our 1993 performance audit report on the Child Settlement Program noted the absence of such a plan. Since 1993, there has been no single statewide plan to coordinate and control the recruitment and retention efforts of the district and State offices. Accordingly, no specific statewide goals and outcomes or measure of outcomes have been developed.

Since 1993, district offices have developed independent recruitment and retention plans of varying quality. However, not all district offices had plans during the audit period. According to DCYF supervisors, the agency still must increase and maintain the public's awareness of the foster care system and the need for foster parents. A sustained approach is necessary as individuals take time to decide on becoming foster parents.

To comply with the Eric L. Settlement Agreement of 1997, the DCYF engaged as consultants Adams-Mathews to review current and past recruitment practices. The 1998 Adams-Mathews report stated:

- The state had a disjointed compilation of district office plans with no overall approach.
- There was no central theme tying the various recruitment strategies together.
- There appeared to be no specific statewide goals and outcomes or measure of outcomes.
- There was no way to determine which recruitment activities worked, repeatedly wasting money and effort in the recruitment process.
- District office supervisors felt a need for stronger recruitment leadership.

The consultant's report recommended the statewide plan not be a compilation of 12 district office plans. In addition, district office plans must fit into an overall statewide plan, which, in turn, should:

- provide direction, goals, expectations, outcomes, and monitoring;
- incorporate a statewide recruitment campaign, as disparate efforts are not appropriate;
- track progress towards goals;
- broaden the role of foster parents in recruitment;
- provide for strong monitoring and data collection;
- allow for separate focus on recruitment and retention as recruitment receives most of the attention; and
- empower and hold accountable district offices for implementing the plan at the local level.

2.1 Recruitment (Continued)

Observation No. 1: The DCYF Needs To Develop And Implement An Adequate Statewide Foster Family Recruitment And Retention Plan (Continued)

The report further noted a statewide plan does not take away from community-based recruitment but provides the district offices with direction and tools to accomplish their job.

Since March 1998, the DCYF has contracted for statewide recruitment and retention support services and technical assistance. The purposes of this contract included:

- developing and implementing a statewide campaign for recruiting and retaining foster parents;
- providing a larger pool of licensed foster parents;
- expanding statewide recruitment and retention of foster parents;
- managing district office recruitment and retention funds;
- designing and processing advertisements;
- developing an assessment tool for district office plans and quarterly reports; and
- meeting Eric L. requirements.

The DCYF's foster care specialist was responsible for overseeing this contract as well as for State-level planning for the foster care system.

Ninety-seven percent of the respondents to our survey of DCYF field staff (Appendix E) reported that there was a need for a cohesive statewide foster parent recruitment effort in addition to district office efforts. Three percent did not see such a need. DCYF staff we interviewed, including three foster care licensing workers, one CPSW supervisor, one assessment supervisor, and one juvenile probation and parole supervisor, as well as private agency staff further emphasized the need for statewide planning.

The DCYF director and a private agency supervisor reported that community uniqueness dictated a decentralized approach.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DCYF develop and implement a statewide foster family recruitment and retention plan that addresses the recommendations made in the Eric L.-required consultant's report. We further recommend the DCYF better leverage the existing support services and technical assistance contract to facilitate developing the plan and assisting in its execution.

Auditee Response:

DO NOT CONCUR: DHHS does not concur that DCYF has failed to develop and implement an adequate statewide foster family recruitment and retention plan. Pursuant to a provision of the Eric L. Settlement Agreement, the department retained two experts on foster care to review the department's recruitment and retention planning. In their January 30, 1998

2.1 Recruitment (Continued)

Observation No. 1: The DCYF Needs To Develop And Implement An Adequate Statewide Foster Family Recruitment And Retention Plan (Continued)

report, Mary Brooks Adams and Joanne Mathews recommended that DCYF “strengthen the statewide recruitment and planning process.” Adams and Mathews commented on the current state of planning and highlighted the connection between a statewide plan and district office recruitment and retention plans:

Currently there is no strong, statewide focused planning process. While a statewide plan is produced, it is primarily a compilation of district plans. An over-arching, centralized plan provides the direction, theme and targets for recruitment activities across the state. This does not take away from community-based recruitment, but rather provides the districts with direction and tools to do the job.

In response to this report, DCYF entered into a contract with Casey Family Services that describes the DCYF statewide plan for recruitment and retention, which is implemented through the technical assistance of the contractor. Statewide planning and coordination is the central focus of this contract. In addition, the state has a five-year Comprehensive Child and Family Services Plan (IV-E plan) that is required of all child protection agencies that receive federal funding under Titles IV-E and IV-B of the Social Security Act, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act and the Teen Independent Living Program. That plan describes the division’s statewide foster family recruitment and retention plan, and has been approved by the Federal Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The state IV-E plan, the current contract with Casey Family Services, and the terms of the RFP describe the DCYF statewide recruitment and retention plan. The state IV-E plan, the contract and the materials produced pursuant to the contract (including statewide media campaign, publications, evaluation tools) represent the components of an adequate statewide plan.

In addition to the department’s non-concurrence with the substance of the observation, DHHS objects to the observation’s selective presentation of certain statements from the Adams/Mathews Report (referred to in the observation as the “consultant’s 1998 report”). The following chart illustrates our concerns:

<i>Adams/Mathews Statement</i>	<i>LBA Presentation</i>
<i>It appears that currently each district develops their own plan, and the statewide plan is primarily a compilation of all the district plans. The resulting plan is disjointed with no overall approach (p.8). Currently there is no strong, statewide focused planning process. While a statewide plan is provided, it is primarily a compilation of district plans (p.19).</i>	<i>The state had a disjointed compilation of district office plans with no overall approach.</i>

2.1 Recruitment (Continued)

Observation No. 1: The DCYF Needs To Develop And Implement An Adequate Statewide Foster Family Recruitment And Retention Plan (Continued)

<p><i>There appeared to be no specific statewide goals and outcomes identified in the 1997 and 1996 plans. District offices did specify outcomes. In the 1997 district plans some districts reported on the outcomes of the 1996 plans and some did not. There apparently is no formal measure of recruitment out-comes. (p.9)</i></p>	<p><i>There appeared to be no specific statewide goals and outcomes or measure of outcomes.</i></p>
<p><i>Data collection is needed to inform future strategies. Currently there does not appear to be any way to determine which recruitment activities bring prospective families to the door. Without this information it is likely that money and efforts are repeatedly wasted in the recruitment process (p.9).</i></p>	<p><i>There was no way to determine which recruitment activities worked, repeatedly wasting money and effort in the recruitment process.</i></p>

In addition, DHHS objects to the observation’s failure to include reference to the significant improvements in the area of foster family recruiting noted by the Eric L. Oversight Panel in its most recent (December 1, 2000) report which evaluates DHHS performance under the Eric L. Settlement Agreement during the later part of the audit period. At page 28 of its December 1, 2000 Report, the Eric L. Panel discussed DHHS’ performance under Section VII, Paragraph 2 of the Settlement Agreement:

Section VII, Paragraph 2 [of the Settlement Agreement] contains a number of distinct responsibilities related to the development of annual recruitment and retention plans: (1) requirements regarding the composition of the team to prepare the plan; (2) compilation and assessment of present data to use as basis for future planning; (3) specific components for the annual plan; and (4) quarterly monitoring of performance under the plan. In its January 1999 Report, the Panel was critical of the first set of plans submitted. The Monitor’s March 2000 Report included copies of the third round of plans (October 1998 – September 30, 1999) and an evaluation of the planning process prepared by Casey Family Services as part of its contract with DCYF to provide technical assistance and support to the recruitment and retention efforts (“The Development and Use of Recruitment and Retention Teams and Plans in NH DCYF Offices”). Included in the technical support provided by Casey were two trainings (June 1998 and June 1999) related to plan preparation, evaluation and recruitment and retention strategies.

he Panel commends DCYF for the significant improvements reflected in the plans included with the Monitor’s March 2000 Report. All district office submitted plans on time and all plans complied with the requirements of Paragraph 2 a-c. Each plan

2.1 Recruitment (Continued)

Observation No. 1: The DCYF Needs To Develop And Implement An Adequate Statewide Foster Family Recruitment And Retention Plan (Continued)

was evaluated by a team at state office utilizing a template for plan quality rating developed by the Casey Research Department and suggestions were made for improvement. The Panel finds that DCYF is presently meeting its responsibilities under Section VII, Paragraph 2 a-c. The Panel requests that copies of the annual plans continue to be included with the Monitor's March reports and that the Monitor conducts an evaluation of the plans...

Paragraph 2 d requires the district office supervisor to "monitor compliance with the plan at least quarterly." The Monitor's March 2000 Report included copies of the Quarterly Report Summary Form for each district office used to monitor plan activity. Each report form was signed by the district office supervisor. Based upon the completion of these forms, including supervisor signature, the Panel finds that DCYF is currently complying with its responsibilities under Section VII, Paragraph 2 d.

LBA Rejoinder:

Neither the DCYF nor the Casey Family Services consultant could provide us with a statewide foster family recruitment and retention plan. The consultant reported to us that the DCYF never asked the consultant to write a statewide plan.

We question whether the year 2000-2004 "Title IV-E plan" referred to by the DCYF comprised an adequate statewide foster family recruitment and retention plan for the FY 1993 - FY 2000 audit period. Foster parent retention comments were contained within one paragraph of the 218 page document and simply referred to the DCYF contract for foster parent support and retention services. The document also contained the following paragraph related to foster parent recruitment-related comments and timelines:

Objective 4: Aggressively recruit foster parents to allow greater flexibility in matching children and families with foster families.

Action steps:

- **Provide increased competency-based training and education for foster parents including training on the expanded role of foster parents in achieving permanency for children. Target date: 9/00 - 9/04**
- **Increase the diversity of membership on recruitment teams in each district office to enhance the ability to recruit a wide array of foster parents. Target date: 9/00**

2.1 Recruitment (Continued)

Observation No. 1: The DCYF Needs To Develop And Implement An Adequate Statewide Foster Family Recruitment And Retention Plan (Continued)

- Explore the feasibility of increasing the foster care payment rate to the USDA standard. Target date: 9/02

We fail to see how the aforementioned two paragraphs comprised an adequate statewide foster family recruitment and retention plan for the audit period.

We also note that the December 1, 2000 Eric L. Panel report, which was required by the settlement agreement to be issued on May 1, 2000, was submitted after our field work was completed. The report mentions district office plans, not a single unified statewide plan.

2.2 Retention

District offices are responsible for helping foster parents remain in the foster family care system. DCYF retention efforts can reduce recruitment, training, and administrative burdens on the DCYF by providing the support necessary to encourage current foster parents to continue to foster. Child protective service workers and juvenile probation and parole officers manage foster family care cases, and should team effectively with and support foster parents and children in placements. However, we found that both insufficient support by DCYF caseworkers and reimbursement issues contributed to foster parents leaving the system. Foster parents also reported that issues with child behaviors caused them to cease foster parenting. Some individuals come into the foster parent system only to provide care for a specific child, and exit the system after the child is no longer in placement in the home.

Observation No. 2

The DCYF Needs To Improve Retention Efforts

The DCYF needs to retain foster parents so that each district office has a sufficient pool of providers. The DCYF has been unable to recruit and maintain sufficient foster family care providers to match with the needs of children who require foster family care placements. The Eric L. monitor and a 1998 federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) report indicated there were insufficient numbers of foster parents to timely match each child's individual needs. Our analysis of the DCYF's limited district office recruitment and retention plan data for the period 1998 through 2000, showed the overall DCYF foster family home turnover rate was 19 percent.

Foster parent retention is hindered by various factors, including satisfaction with the DCYF. The DCYF Bureau of Quality Improvement (BQI), between August 1999 and June 2000, reported on four district office reviews it conducted. The BQI reviews included foster

2.2 Retention (Continued)

Observation No. 2: The DCYF Needs To Improve Retention Efforts (Continued)

parent satisfaction surveys. Our analysis of the survey responses revealed foster parent issues with the foster care system:

BQI Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey Question	Satisfied (percent)	Dissatisfied (percent)
Receive copy of case plan	41	59
Am involved in case planning	47	53
Am satisfied with the amount of contact I have with the CPSW/JPPO	58	42
CPSW/JPPO keeps me informed about case plan changes	59	41
Am satisfied by the amount of contact the CPSW/JPPO has with my foster child	61	39
Telephone calls are quickly returned by the CPSW/JPPO	63	37
Am viewed as a partner critical to the success of the foster child	71	29
The CPSW/JPPO listens and values my input	71	29
Receive help and support such as finding providers for my foster child	71	29
Am aware of the family history/circumstances that led to DCYF involvement	72	28
Am aware of my foster child's educational history and needs	74	26
Receive foster care subsidy payments on a timely basis	74	26
Receive a written notice inviting me to administrative review	78	22

Source: LBA analysis of DCYF data.

We also found indications that the foster family care system needs to improve its support to foster parents including its responsiveness, after hours and weekend support, and reimbursement rates. Respondents to our survey of former DCYF foster parents (Appendix C) revealed varied reasons they stopped foster parenting, including:

- poor communication with CPSW – 34 percent;
- lack of CPSW support – 32 percent;
- child's behavior too difficult to manage – 32 percent;
- inadequate foster care reimbursements – 29 percent;
- was provider for a specific child – 29 percent;
- foster care payments not timely – 27 percent; and
- lack of respite services – 23 percent.

When past DCYF foster parents were asked what "one thing" would have prevented them from leaving fostering, 43 percent of respondents mentioned better support, including DCYF worker communication. Some respondents (17 percent) mentioned that nothing

2.2 Retention (Continued)

Observation No. 2: The DCYF Needs To Improve Retention Efforts (Continued)

would have prevented them from stopping foster parenting. Other reasons for departing foster care included moving, children aging out of the system, adopting children, and divorce.

The DCYF foster care specialist reported that the division no longer conducts exit interviews with former foster parents. The DCYF reported they had destroyed exit survey data therefore it was not available to the LBA. However, according to the Adams-Mathews report of DCYF recruiting and retention practices required by the Eric L. Settlement Agreement, its analysis of DCYF 1995 exit survey data showed that 25 percent of foster parents “clearly left because of problems working with the agency,” and contemplated the impact of the DCYF retaining those families. The consultant’s report also indicated that focus groups and telephone interviews with foster parents were “consistent with” limited DCYF exit survey results. Furthermore, the consultant reported that: DCYF exit surveys were conducted in 1995 but not continued; well informed retention planning cannot be conducted if the DCYF did not know why foster parents left; exit interview data was extremely valuable and the DCYF should conduct exit interviews; lack of exit interviews emphasized the lack of the DCYF’s partnership with foster parents “right to the very end.”

DCYF foster care providers who experience dissatisfaction with the DCYF system may affect the retention or recruitment of others. Although 71 percent of respondents to our survey of former DCYF foster parents (Appendix C) indicated they had not recommended to anyone not to foster parent due to their experiences with the DCYF, 29 percent indicated they told an average of 2.5 people not to foster parent due to dissatisfaction with the DCYF.

Decreased retention of foster parents increases the burden on district office recruitment efforts. Also, the lack of sufficient number and types of foster care providers may pressure the DCYF to relax its application of licensing standards in order to keep children in current placements.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DCYF begin evaluating, reporting on, and working to resolve common district office retention issues. One method the DCYF should immediately employ is to conduct exit surveys to determine why foster parents leave the DCYF system, and use the results to target improvements in the retention of foster family care providers.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART: Although DHHS’s foster parent retention rate of 80% as determined by the LBA, is significantly higher than the national average, DHHS believes that DHHS can improve its retention of foster parents by addressing central concerns of communication and reimbursement. During the audit period, DHHS has taken a number of steps to improve communication and reimbursement. DCYF has improved the information provided to foster

2.2 Retention (Continued)

Observation No. 2: The DCYF Needs To Improve Retention Efforts (Continued)

parents by developing and distributing the Foster Parents Handbook, which contains detailed information about practices and procedures and lists important phone numbers for department staff. DHHS has also resumed the process of exit surveys for departing foster parents. Exit surveys were conducted through 1997 but were discontinued as the result of staffing shortages. Exit surveys were reinstated in December 2000 when surveys were mailed to all foster homes closed in 2000. Responses are being analyzed by UNH Professor Mary Essley. Data collected through the surveys will be used to improve the foster care system.

Also during the audit period the DHHS improved payments to foster parents in a number of ways consistent with the resources provided by the General Court. Through the DCYF provider payment budget line, DCYF provided a 5% rate increase on 10/1/97, a 5% rate increase on 10/1/98, a 3% rate increase on 10/1/99 and a 3% rate increase on 10/1/00. In addition, in SFY 2000, the clothing allowance for foster children was increased 25% from \$.60 per day to \$.75 per day. Finally, beginning in November 2000, children in care receive an annual special occasion allowance that can be used for clothing or miscellaneous expenses. The annual amount varies between \$150 and \$225, depending on the age of the child in care.

In addition to these improvements, DHHS expects to implement an automated payment system for foster care payments that should improve both the timeliness and accuracy of foster care reimbursement and reduce the paperwork burden on foster parents.

Despite our belief that DCYF can take additional steps to retain foster parents, we are compelled to include in this response our concerns about certain data included in the observation.

The observation draws on the LBA Survey of Former DCYF Foster Parents included as Attachment C to the Audit Report. We note that the LBA requested DHHS provide the LBA with the names and addresses of approximately 900 former DCYF foster parents. The LBA sent written surveys to 63 of these 900 former DCYF foster parents. The LBA received replies from 35 former foster parents. Appendix C does not indicate how the 63 were chosen for the survey.

Even if the responses of 35 out of 900 former DCYF foster parents form an adequate statistical basis for an observation about retention, DHHS believes that the presentation of the survey results is incomplete. We note that:

- In paragraph 3 (which begins, "We also found...") the data summarized is derived from a survey question (See Appendix C-1 and C-2), which asked former foster parents to respond to a list of 29 factors that contributed to their decision to stop being a foster parent. The respondent was to check "yes" if the factor contributed to his/her decision and "no" if it did not. The bulleted data presented in paragraph 3 specifically references only 7 of the 29 factors, identifies the percentages only if the

2.2 Retention (Continued)

Observation No. 2: The DCYF Needs To Improve Retention Efforts (Continued)

“yes” responses and does not include the percentage of “no” responses (which indicates that the factor did not play a part in the decision to leave fostering).

- Although the survey identified a number of significant factors that may cause individuals to leave fostering but which are unrelated to their relationship with DHHS (age, marital problems, health, adopted foster child), such material was not presented with the same level of detail as the critical data. Such significant material was presented in the following single sentence without percentages: “Other reasons for departing foster care included moving, children aging out of the system, adopting children and divorce.” In the interest of objectivity, the observation should clearly state that a significant number of respondents identified factors for leaving fostering that had nothing to do with DCYF performance. Such factors include:*

	Yes	No
<i>Age (felt too old to care for foster children.)</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>90%</i>
<i>Marital Problems</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>87%</i>
<i>Health Problems</i>	<i>16%</i>	<i>84%</i>
<i>Moved/Relocated</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>80%</i>
<i>Expect to have own (or additional) children</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>93%</i>
<i>Adopted foster child</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>87%</i>
<i>Child Specific Foster Home</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>71%</i>
<i>Became provider for a child placing agency</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>91%</i>

LBA Rejoinder:

As stated in our observation, the conclusions reached rely on a number of resources.

2.3 Matching

DCYF personnel report foster child placement efforts should include matching the needs of foster children with appropriate foster families. Unless there are adequate numbers and types of foster family homes, foster children may not be matched appropriately, potentially limiting placement effectiveness. Considerations for optimizing placements include keeping the child in the same school system, sharing ethnic or racial heritage, sharing of the same religious heritage, and the prospective provider having sufficient expertise to meet a child’s needs, including medical and mental health issues. Thus, the DCYF and each district office require a sufficient and varied pool of licensed foster family providers. However, our analysis indicates that the DCYF needs to better match providers with children.

2.3 Matching (Continued)

Impediments to appropriately matching foster parents with the needs of children include lack of: qualified foster parents, assessment homes, a formal guideline mechanism to assess potential matches, and information about children coming into care. Inappropriate placements may affect all areas of foster care including foster parent retention, the ability to have children remain in placements, and the willingness of the DCYF to enforce its licensing standards for fear of reducing the undersized provider pool.

Observation No. 3

Improvement Needed In Foster Care Matching

The DCYF must match and place children with trained, licensed foster family care providers suited to meet a placed child's respective needs. Numerous sources explain

that district offices are challenged to appropriately match foster children with foster family care providers. The foster care system lacks sufficient numbers of homes willing to accept children with varied needs, lacks sufficient information about children coming into care, and maintains children in foster care placements that are inappropriate to the needs of the children. The child protection administrator reported that although the DCYF should match children and providers, the division usually matches an available bed with a child. The director reported that there are inappropriate placements, including children placed into the nearest bed available. Respondents to our survey of current DCYF foster family care providers (Appendix A) also reported matching issues: approximately 44 percent agreed that children placed with them were well matched to what the foster parents could provide, 23 percent disagreed, and 33 percent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Numerous sources have identified a need for more foster homes, including: 1) all district office recruitment and retention plans for the periods 1998 through 2000; 2) DCYF BQI reviews of four district offices conducted during 1999 and 2000; 3) a 1998 federal ACF report; and 4) the Eric L. monitor.

Licensing rules allow for assessment home providers that, for up to 60 days, help care for and assess the needs of children about which the DCYF knows very little. However, the DCYF did not recruit for or license any assessment providers during the audit period. The DCYF and other personnel reported challenges with matching children, especially when the DCYF lacks information about a child, including during emergencies. The DCYF director reported that the division does not sufficiently identify the needs of children coming into care. The child protection administrator reported the division may lack knowledge about a foster child's background. After a match is made and the child is placed, the child may present previously undisclosed information to the foster family care provider, possibly rendering the placement unviable.

According to the DCYF's clinical director, district office recruitment and retention reports, and other sources, some children placed by the DCYF into general foster homes needed to be in more intensive placements, including residential group home placements. Additionally, others who required foster care placements instead were placed into group homes.

2.3 Matching (Continued)

Observation No. 3: Improvement Needed In Foster Care Matching (Continued)

The DCYF lacks a formal, system-wide foster care placement matching mechanism that would help to uniformly assess and rate the feasibility of a proposed child-provider match. One district office reported in a recruitment and retention plan that it developed general foster home child placement guidelines for its staff “to identify what behaviors should be considered acceptable/unacceptable...due to the growing concern that the level of difficulty presented by ‘regular’ foster child placements has increased.”

According to a consultant contracted to improve DCYF recruiting and retention practices, inappropriate matching may affect every part of the foster family care system. Mismatching may result in disrupted placements in that foster parents may request children be removed from the respective foster home. DCYF foster parents may be pressured into maintaining foster child placements. Twenty-six percent of former DCYF foster parents responding to our survey (Appendix C) disagreed with the statement, “I was never pressured to keep a foster child placement.”

Recommendation:

The DCYF should:

- **Begin gathering baseline and ongoing information from district offices and foster family care providers regarding inappropriate placements, and use the data to plan for, monitor, and adjust improvements to the foster family care program system.**
- **Improve efforts in assessing the needs of children coming into the foster family care system, including utilization of assessment homes.**
- **Develop and enforce uniform policies and procedures governing its matching of children with foster family care providers.**

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. The department concurs that there is a need to improve foster care matching in order to insure that the needs of children entering foster care are being met by the most appropriate provider available. The department has worked to address this need both through its statewide efforts at recruitment and retention of foster family homes and through its efforts to develop and fund assessment homes that are capable of providing comprehensive, individualized evaluations of children entering the foster care system.

As detailed in its response to observation #2, the department’s foster home recruitment efforts have included the development of both local and statewide plans for the recruitment and retention of foster parents. The departments local recruitment and retention plans have been praised by both the Adams/Matthews report referenced in the observation and by the Eric L Oversight Panel. The Adams/Matthews report states that,

2.3 Matching (Continued)

Observation No. 3: Improvement Needed In Foster Care Matching (Continued)

“New Hampshire knows how to do community based recruitment. Past recruitment plans demonstrate an understanding of community-based recruitment. The agency has taken long range, ongoing approaches. They have used needs assessments to do targeted recruitment. They have utilized a variety of recruitment methods. There have been creative approaches to recruiting such as the design of the web site. Most importantly, there seems to be an acceptance of the long term and tenacious aspects of foster care recruitment.”

Similarly, the Eric L. Oversight Panel in its December 1, 2000 report said of the district office recruitment and retention plans that,

“The Panel commends DCYF for the significant improvements reflected in the plans included with the Monitor’s March 2000 Report. All district office submitted plans on time and all plans complied with the requirements of Paragraph 2 a-c. Each plan was evaluated by a team at state office utilizing a template for plan quality rating developed by the Casey Research department and suggestions were made for improvement.

In addition to its local recruitment and retention efforts, the department has, since 1998 contracted with an agency to develop and implement a statewide campaign for the recruitment and retention of foster parents. That contract provides for the development of a statewide campaign for both general and specific foster home recruitment as well as the development of a methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of statewide and local recruitment and retention efforts.

While recognizing the state’s need to recruit additional foster homes, the Adams/Matthews report also noted that the number of New Hampshire foster homes per 1000 children in out of home care was significantly higher than the national median.

The department acknowledges the need for assessment homes and has undertaken repeated efforts to develop them. Those efforts, however, have been hampered by the department’s lack of resources. Following the adoption of administrative rules which allowed for the licensing of assessment homes, the department developed a pilot assessment home project in one of its district offices. That project was discontinued, however, when it became clear that the district office lacked sufficient resources to be able to respond in a timely manner to the pressing needs of the assessment homes. The department subsequently explored the possibility of contracting with a licensed child-placing agency to provide for assessment homes. The department drafted an RFP which would have provided for five assessment homes in each of six district offices throughout the state in order to met the anticipated needs. The estimated cost to contract for the provision of these services, however, was prohibitive and the RFP was not circulated. In its 2002-2003 budget, the department requested funds for a pilot project to develop assessment homes in two areas of the state to assess the needs of foster children requiring specialized placements. The amount requested

2.3 Matching (Continued)

Observation No. 3: Improvement Needed In Foster Care Matching (Continued)

by the department in SFY 03 to develop these homes was \$543,750. The funds for this pilot project were not included in the state 2002/2003 budget as passed by the General Court.

As previously stated, the department acknowledges that not all children are placed at appropriate level placements when entering the foster care system. While inappropriate level placements occur for a variety of reasons, such placements are the exception and not the rule.

2.4 Training

Prospective foster family parents receive pre-service training from district office foster care licensing workers and the CLL. Foster family care providers receive in-service training from the DCYF, the CLL, and other sources. Licensing rules set training requirements for prospective and current foster parents.

Our 1993 performance audit reported the pre-service training program required improvement. The historical training model, in which each district office was responsible for providing pre-service training, transitioned during the audit period. The DCYF contracted with the CLL in 1997 to standardize delivery of foster parent pre-service training. The CLL also was awarded a contract for delivering foster parent pre-service training in fiscal years 2000 and 2001. Under the new model, each district office's foster care licensing worker is responsible for delivering pre-service orientation and regulatory training modules. Our review indicated that although pre-service training has been upgraded, additional improvement is needed regarding accessing supports and services, and for completing the necessary forms.

Observation No. 4

The Pre-Service Training Program Needs Additional Improvement

The foster parent pre-service training program managed by the DCYF appears to be improving. Our 1993 performance audit report on the Child Settlement Program observed that

the pre-service training program needed improvement. The division concurred with our observation at that time and stated that improvements would be made, including using foster parent co-trainers in each district office.

Responses to our mail survey of current DCYF foster parents (Appendix A) indicated that 89 percent hold the opinion that pre-service training was effective in providing them with an understanding of their role as a foster parent. However, other responses from our survey indicated that DCYF pre-service training needs additional improvement in several areas as outlined in Table 2.

2.4 Training (Continued)

Observation No. 4: The Pre-Service Training Program Needs Additional Improvement (Continued)

Table 2

Pre-Service Training Topics Needing Improvement			
My pre-service training provided me sufficient understanding of:	Rating		
	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree
Ways to contact the agency after hours including weekends	42%	17%	42%
Services provided by the agency	46%	14%	40%
Transportation reimbursement policy	46%	26%	29%
Foster care legal aspects	46%	26%	29%
How to fill out payment forms	56%	19%	25%
Respite care policy	56%	24%	21%

Source: LBA analysis of current DCYF foster parent mail survey responses (Appendix A).

Following our 1993 report, the division twice modified pre-service training: once as a result of our observation and a second time due to the Eric L. Settlement Agreement. The Eric L. agreement required 21 hours of unified and comprehensive pre-service training for foster parents be developed before March 1, 1998 and implemented by September 1, 1998. The latest training model for prospective DCYF foster parents began in the fall of 1998 and involved classes developed and taught by personnel from the CLL and others developed and taught by DCYF personnel. CLL was brought into the pre-service training process to make training consistent statewide. By contract, CLL training is offered at each district office twice per year. Several DCYF and non-DCYF personnel involved with the pre-service training program offered positive comments regarding CLL's role.

The DCYF developed pre-service orientation and regulatory modules related to DCYF policies, procedures, and forms. Foster care licensing workers from each district office delivered orientation and regulatory training. Foster parent co-trainers who could share their foster care-related experiences with prospective foster parents were used inconsistently by the DCYF. Inconsistent use of foster parent co-trainers undermines the division's goal of partnering between staff and foster parents, and may deny prospective foster parents valuable insights into the realities of foster parenting.

Our survey of current DCYF field staff (Appendix E) asked, "Please discuss your feelings about how well foster parents are prepared for foster parenting by pre-service training." Respondents' opinions were as follows:

- Thirty-seven percent believed that foster parents were trained well while 26 percent believed that foster parents were not trained adequately.
- Thirty-seven percent believed that foster parents can not be trained enough and need fostering experience.

2.4 Training (Continued)

Observation No. 4: The Pre-Service Training Program Needs Additional Improvement (Continued)

- Twenty-two percent of respondents believed that areas of pre-service training needed improvement.

Current DCYF foster parents and staff also reported that foster parents may have received pre-service training that did not prepare them to complete and file required paperwork related to expense reimbursement, licensing, and child welfare reporting. Foster parents with insufficient training on these requirements may cause delays in these areas. Remediation efforts to gather needed information may exacerbate DCYF workloads; the DCYF has already reported it is short-staffed. Foster parents may become frustrated when reimbursement payments are not timely as noted in Observation No. 15.

DCYF pre-service training does not regularly notify participants that funds may be available to reimburse foster parents for some costs incurred in meeting licensing-related local fire and safety codes. Federal funds to reimburse foster parents and prospective foster parents for costs incurred to meet the current local fire and safety code are managed by the State office and have been available since 1990.

DCYF district office personnel indicated that pre-service training could be scheduled more frequently. One licensing worker stated that infrequent scheduling of pre-service training has resulted in foster parents not pursuing the application process through to completion, while another commented that infrequent class offerings hindered prospective foster parents from making up missed classes.

Training is a cornerstone of support for foster parents. Untrained foster parents may not be prepared for the demands and challenges of foster care nor know how to access support and services. This may have contributed to foster parents exiting the program, placing greater burden on the State's recruiting efforts.

Finally, DCYF pre-service training has not been adequately evaluated. The Eric L. Oversight Panel found in its January 1999 report that the DCYF did not evaluate pre-service training. Consequently, the Panel found that the DCYF only partially met the Agreement's pre-service training requirements. This same report found that the DCYF had not begun utilizing the new pre-service training model by the date required in the Agreement. Eric L. noncompliance places the State at risk from renewed legal action according to the DCYF's director.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DCYF:

- **Develop a sufficient feedback process to evaluate its pre-service training program. This process should include obtaining foster parent opinions of pre-**

2.4 Training (Continued)

Observation No. 4: The Pre-Service Training Program Needs Additional Improvement (Continued)

service training after they have had a child in care and have been able to compare their pre-service training needs to the pre-service training received. The DCYF should adjust its pre-service training accordingly, including incorporating training to meet the needs identified in foster parent surveys.

- Add flexibility to the program to allow prospective foster parents to make up missed training in a timely manner including the option to receive training at other district offices within reasonable commuting distances. This should be incorporated into the statewide foster parent recruitment and retention plan discussed in Observation No. 1.
- Ensure that the DCYF orientation and regulatory modules are standardized across the district offices, and include sufficient training about properly filling out required foster care related forms.
- Ensure that the DCYF orientation and regulatory modules instruct foster parents on how to access all the services and supports that are available.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DHHS concurs that it has made significant improvements in the pre-service training (Foundations for Fostering or FFF) for prospective foster parents. We note that in section 1.6 of the Audit the LBA states "DCYF has made significant improvements in its foster parent pre-service training program."

DHHS does not concur that the curriculum has not been adequately evaluated and cites the following evaluative activities in support of its view:

- *The curriculum was developed and a training of trainers was held July 1999*
- *The curriculum was tested for one year, evaluated by participants and trainers and revised under contract with College for Life Long Learning (CLL)*
- *A Training of Trainers was conducted with the newly revised curriculum June 2000*
- *Evaluation has been conducted by CLL of the FFF since its initial delivery in two parts, scaled responses and written comments. In recent training, in two parts, scaled responses (1 through 5) with a high of 1 and a low of 1.6.*
- *Monitoring of the FFF was begun in Winter 2001 by CLL staff in three locales to ensure consistent, universal delivery of training.*
- *DCYF has adapted the CLL evaluation form and released the same as policy 4/01 to consistently measure the participant reaction to the FFF training.*

DHHS notes that in its December 2000 Report, the Eric L. Oversight Panel found that DCYF had complied with its responsibilities to develop and utilize a "unified and comprehensive 21-hour pre-service training curriculum for foster parents which includes instruction in child development, family systems and separation and attachment." DHHS objects both to

2.4 Training (Continued)

Observation No. 4: The Pre-Service Training Program Needs Additional Improvement (Continued)

the lack of reference to the December 2000 Panel Report in the observation, and to the inclusion of the reference to the January 1999 Panel Report.

DHHS does not concur that the pre-service training curriculum needs additional improvement by the addition of the proposed topics noted in the observation. The FFF is designed as a mutual selection process, which provides applicants with information to enable them to make a decision about becoming a foster parent. It includes an overview of payment procedures (Orientation), clinical aspects of care (Grief and Loss), seriousness of children's problems (Impact of Trauma on child Development) (Sexual Abuse and Safe Environments) and dealing with biological parents (Maintaining Family Connectedness). As noted above, the Eric L. Oversight Panel found that the curriculum complies with the Eric L. requirements. Given the focus of FFF, detailed instruction on billing procedures and forms is neither necessary nor appropriate.

DHHS concurs that foster parents are valuable partners in the training of prospective licensed foster parents. The following data reveals the high level of foster parent involvement with the pre-service training process.

- *In a training profile of the 67 active instructors for FFF and COT (Caregiver Ongoing Training), 22% of the trainers have experience as foster/adoptive parents*
- *Foster parent co-trainers participate in a prerequisite course, delivering effective training in order to be considered a co-trainer. 28 foster parents have taken this course since 1995, 19 are trained in FFF and there are currently 7 co-trainers who are actively working with the Education and Training Partnership as FFF trainers.*
- *Percentage of Foster Parents who Teach FFF Summer 2000, 55%; Fall 2000, 89%; Winter 2001, 76%; Spring 2001, 99%; overall average 80% of the instructors for FFF were foster parents.*

DHHS does not concur with the observation that access to pre-service training needs improvement. The CLL conducted 24 series of training in the FY01 contract, and is scheduled to conduct 30 series in the next year. Additionally, a schedule of training is maintained by CLL and participation across district office lines is encouraged. The DCYF website www.nhfostercare.org maintains a list of FFF training locations and dates. Additionally, DCYF staff are trained in the FFF curriculum and can offer training in their local district offices or other locations and times that are convenient to applicants.

DHHS does not concur with the inclusion of the fourth paragraph of the observation because it deals with information that is provided during the licensing process and is not appropriate during the pre-service training period.

As noted above, DHHS does not concur with the final paragraph of the observation because the curriculum has been appropriately evaluated and the December 2000 Report of the Eric

2.4 Training (Continued)

Observation No. 4: The Pre-Service Training Program Needs Additional Improvement (Continued)

L. Panel found that DCYF had complied with the requirements concerning the development and use of a comprehensive pre-service training curriculum.

LBA Rejoinder:

The focus of the observation is pre-service training of foster family care providers during the eight-year audit period, FY 1993 – FY 2000. The DCYF response references subsequent activity that was not audited:

- “Monitoring of the FFF was begun in Winter 2001...”;
- “DCYF has adapted the CLL evaluation form and released the same as policy 4/01...”;
- “Percentage of Foster Parents who Teach FFF Summer 2000, 55%; Fall 2000, 89%; Winter 2001, 76%...”; and
- December 2000 Eric L. Oversight Panel report.

We question whether DHHS information regarding instructor training profiles is applicable to audit-period, pre-service training of foster parents: the DHHS profile is of current training personnel, and includes personnel who were adoptive parents and who do not teach pre-service training.

Both DCYF personnel and foster family parents identified that the DCYF needed to include information regarding billing procedures and forms during pre-service training.

We question whether it is prudent for the DCYF to withhold, during pre-service training discussions, information regarding possible reimbursement for costs associated with fire inspections. The DCYF’s Foundations For Fostering (FFF) “Trainer’s Manual” lists pre-service training relevant to fire inspections:

- the steps to becoming a licensed foster home, including the objective “Review licensing paperwork and process”;
- under the discussion of permitting, “2. Fire Inspection completed by your local fire inspector”;
- under the discussion of license renewal, “1. Another fire inspection is required.”

We feel that providing information about DCYF reimbursement of fire inspection related costs during pre-service training would promote effective and open DCYF communication with foster parents.

2.4 Training (Continued)

Observation No. 4: The Pre-Service Training Program Needs Additional Improvement (Continued)

We identified, from various analyses, areas of pre-service training that require improvement. We question whether the Eric L. Settlement Agreement and Eric L. Oversight Panel reports are sufficient substitutes for a performance audit of foster family care in New Hampshire.

2.5 Licensing

According to RSA 170-E:27, I, child placing agencies and child care agencies, including foster care providers, must be licensed. Prospective foster care providers apply for licensure to DCYF district offices or a licensed child placing agency. Foster care licensing is the State's means to assure that foster children are placed in a safe, stable, supervised home environment with surrogate providers or family members that meet minimum standards.

Prospective foster parents must meet age requirements, have sufficient income, read and write English, have a high school diploma, and pass a criminal background check. Additionally, each applicant and applicant's family must meet with a licensing agency representative at least twice prior to licensure, and cooperate in completing a written assessment, or home study, of the family's ability to meet foster family care licensing requirements. Furthermore, foster family homes must comply with certain State and local code requirements. RSA 170-E:28, II, requires that local fire departments apply the local single family residence fire code to foster family homes. According to administrative rule He-C 6446, the DHHS may waive certain licensing requirements.

According to RSA 170-E:31, foster family home facilities may be issued a temporary, six-month permit in specific cases. Permits are intended to be a temporary status to allow licensing requirements to be met by prospective providers or current providers who changed residences. However, statute and administrative rule require completion of application forms, home visits, criminal background checks, central registry checks, and fire code reviews before permits may be issued. According to RSA 170-E:25, XII, permits may be renewed within the six-month window for good cause shown.

Types of foster family care licenses include: 1) general foster family care, 2) specialized care, 3) emergency care, and 4) assessment care. Regulations govern each type of care category. An additional type of foster family care – therapeutic foster care – is addressed within administrative rules He-C 6350 governing certification for payment for residential facilities.

General foster family care is defined by rule as a “temporary, substitute family life experience for children.” *Specialized* foster family care providers must attend additional training, have at least one year of foster parent experience, be recommended by professionals in the field, and maintain records with greater detail on each foster child. *Emergency* care is 24-hour care, limited to a ten-day period, and providers must attend additional training. *Assessment* foster care providers must be recommended by

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

professionals in the field, attend additional training, assess a child for no longer than 60 days, have one year of experience, and provide 24-hour supervision by a licensee.

Additionally, the DCYF uses provisional interim care (PIC) agreements for temporary child placements while a foster home is applying for a permit or license. Agency personnel reported that PICs were used when a family had an established relationship with a foster child. The PIC home is not eligible for liability insurance, and the PIC agreement expires after 30 days whereupon the home should be licensed.

Administrative rule He-C 6350.14 (g) requires *therapeutic* foster care "be provided by an agency that has a family-centered focus in which foster parents and clinical support staff provide intensive services to children and their families and implement a structured treatment plan." Although therapeutic foster care parents work with children with intensive needs, these caregivers are only required to be general foster care providers. In Section 4 of this report we identify some issues we noted with therapeutic level foster care, including the use of individualized service option homes and individualized placements.

There are limitations on the total number of children - foster, birth, adopted, respite, or other children - in each foster home. A home with two licensed providers may have a total of six children, while a home with one licensed provider may care for a maximum of four total children.

Licenses for foster family homes and specialized care are issued for a maximum of two years. The DHHS is required to make at least one monitoring visit per licensee per year. Non-licensed foster family homes may receive emergency foster family home placements for a maximum of 30 days without penalty.

Our analysis found that the DCYF licensing process had problems in the following areas: 1) unmet statutory and administrative licensing requirements, 2) inconsistently maintained rules, 3) unenforceable licensing requirements, and 4) children placed in unlicensed and unpermitted homes. Substantive issues with DCYF licensing actions were generally acknowledged by various levels of field and State office staff to be widespread throughout the foster care system. The DCYF did not assure that children were placed in homes that met minimum State licensing standards, potentially compromising the safety of children in placements and subjecting the State to legal liability.

Observation No. 5

The DCYF Needs To License Homes Specifically For Delinquents And Children In Need Of Services

The DCYF does not license foster homes specifically for placement of delinquent minors or CHINS as required by State law. The DCYF's current and former rules governing the licensure of foster homes throughout the audit period contain no references to licensing foster family homes to receive children expressly found to be delinquent or in need of services.

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 5: The DCYF Needs To License Homes Specifically For Delinquents And Children In Need Of Services (Continued)

RSA 169-B stipulates foster homes accepting delinquent children be "...specifically licensed to accept delinquent children..." while RSA 169-D requires foster homes accepting CHINS be "...specifically licensed to accept children in need of services...." RSA 170-E:31 places responsibility for licensing foster homes with the DHHS.

The DCYF and child placing agencies placed delinquents and CHINS into foster family homes including general homes as well as therapeutic foster homes, individualized service option homes, and individualized placement homes. The DCYF reported that CHINS and delinquents accounted for less than ten percent of the children in foster family homes.

DCYF staff remarked that more foster family homes capable of providing care to delinquents and CHINS were needed in order to place affected children closer to their respective biological parents' homes and to better meet a requirement to place each child in a least restrictive placement. However, homes willing to care for delinquents or CHINS were difficult to find. According to DCYF staff, the division did not specifically recruit for homes licensed to accept delinquents or CHINS. Nor did the State's contracted consultant for foster home recruitment and retention and technical assistance commit resources toward recruiting homes to specifically license to accept CHINS or delinquents. The lack of foster family home placement availability caused suitable delinquents and CHINS to be placed into more restrictive and costly group settings, straining resources and putting children in more restrictive placements.

DCYF staff indicated that the foster family care system is not arranged to care for delinquents or CHINS, and that foster parents currently lack training in managing CHINS or delinquents. DCYF staff concluded that delinquents or CHINS might burn out foster parents not properly prepared for such youths.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DCYF:

- **Amend its licensing rules to meet the requirements in State law for homes specifically licensed for CHINS and delinquent youth,**
- **Recruit foster parents to serve the CHINS and delinquent populations,**
- **Properly train prospective parents receiving CHINS or delinquents, and**
- **Place delinquents and CHINS only in homes licensed to receive them.**

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DHHS concurs with the observation that RSA 169-B:19 and RSA 169-D:17 stipulate that foster homes accepting delinquents and CHINS respectively be "specifically licensed" for each population. To address this issue HB-501 was introduced in

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 5: The DCYF Needs To License Homes Specifically For Delinquents And Children In Need Of Services (Continued)

the 2001 legislative session at the request of the department. HB-501 has been signed by the Governor. Effective 8/25/01 it repeals those portions of RSA 169-B and RSA 169-D that require that foster homes accepting delinquents and CHINS respectively be “specifically licensed” for each population. DCYF does not license foster home by petition type. For the reasons given below, licensing for petition type would be clinically inappropriate and represent an inefficient use of resources.

DCYF places foster children in foster homes according to their needs, not according to their petition type. How a child enters the DCYF system is not determinative of the child’s needs for care and support. A fourteen year old girl who, as the result of undisclosed sexual abuse in the home, runs away from home and engages in petty theft, could come into the DCYF system under 169-C (if a teacher or friend reported concerns about abuse), under RSA 169-D if her parents or the school reported her as a runaway or under 169-B if her initial contact with DCYF resulted from an arrest for shoplifting. This girl’s needs for safety and services should not be determined by the petition that brought her to the attention of DCYF.

DCYF does not specifically recruit foster homes to serve delinquents or to serve CHINS. However, DCYF and its contracted consultant do recruit foster homes for adolescents. DCYF’s district offices foster care recruitment and retention plans reflect a strong commitment to the recruitment of additional foster homes for adolescents, regardless of petition type. In addition, the contracted consultant both recruits foster homes for all ages and utilizes child-specific recruitment as needed.

While the DCYF recognizes the challenges faced by all parents, foster or otherwise, who care for adolescent children, DCYF does not concur with the statements in Paragraph 5 of the observation that “foster parents currently lack training in managing CHINS or delinquents.” Materials from the College of Lifelong Learning indicate that foster parents have access to and attend regular training related adolescent issues.

Rulemaking

Administrative rule He-C 6446 governs State foster family care licensing requirements. Rules, in part, implement, interpret, or make specific a statute enforced by an agency and make policy, procedure, and practice binding on persons outside the agency, including the general public (RSA 541-A:1, XV). The rule making process allows for public and legislative oversight of an agency’s operation. The lack of comprehensive rules may unnecessarily expose the State to risk.

The DHHS is required by statute to adopt rules governing the foster family care system. The rules set minimum standards to assure each child is placed in a safe, stable family home environment, as well as due process provisions for providers of foster family care

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

whose licenses or permits are suspended, denied, revoked, or refused. The DCYF reports rules are promulgated to expand and specify in detail what laws intend.

DHHS commitment and coordination of resources to ensure the timely promulgation of statutorily required administrative rules is insufficient. Agency personnel, including the DCYF director, the child protection administrator, and the foster care specialist reported current and historic DCYF staffing levels hamper rule making. DCYF legal counsel apprised the DCYF director of the need to adopt required rules; other key staff reported being aware of longstanding rule deficiencies as well. However, the DCYF director expressed the opinion that expired rules set precedence and were binding on external parties.

Homes must be licensed according to administrative rules in order to be certified for payments. RSA 170-G:4, XVIII, and administrative rule He-C 6350 require that providers of services, to include foster homes, be certified before receiving payment. Furthermore, in order for the State to receive 50 percent federal reimbursement for eligible foster care expenses, foster homes must be licensed in accordance with established State standards. However, we found that licensing rules were expired during parts of the audit period. Our 1993 performance audit reported that the division failed to promulgate rules in numerous areas including foster family care licensing.

Observation No. 6

The DHHS Needs To Consistently Maintain Foster Family Care Licensing Rules

For nearly 20 months of the audit period, the DHHS failed to ensure that statutorily required administrative rules governing the licensing and relicensing of foster family homes were in effect. The administrative rules helped assure the quality and safety of foster home placements by requiring pre-service and in-service training, criminal and central registry background checks, medical checkups, fire and health inspections of foster homes, and prescribing corrective measures to rectify deficiencies when they existed. Administrative rule He-C 6446, Foster Family Care Licensing Requirements, expired on August 28, 1992, was not readopted until October 22, 1993, and again expired on October 22, 1999. An interim rule was adopted effective December 28, 1999, expired on April 26, 2000, and was not fully readopted until July 22, 2000. The DCYF and private child placing agencies continued to enforce expired rules, contrary to RSA 541-A:22, by applying expired licensing standards to foster family homes throughout the affected periods.

During the periods He-C 6446 had expired, the State could not legally administer foster family home licensing. Without licensing rules in effect, we question whether homes could be certified for payment as required by State rule He-C 6350.15 (a). Also, in order for New Hampshire to receive 50 percent federal reimbursement for eligible foster care expenses, foster homes were to be licensed in accordance with established standards (42 USC 672 (c)). Additionally, the DHHS was not in compliance with the Eric L. Settlement Agreement requiring the DCYF have administrative rules stipulating foster parent in-service training hours.

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 6: The DHHS Needs To Consistently Maintain Foster Family Care Licensing Rules (Continued)

Recommendation:

We recommend that the DHHS ensure rules required by RSAs 161 and 170-E are maintained in accordance with the requirements of RSA 541-A.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DHHS acknowledges gaps in the effective dates of its administrative rules related to foster family home licensing. DHHS notes that the current He-C 6446 which were substantially revised and were effective July, 2000 address many of the LBA concerns about the comprehensiveness of the licensing rules.

The observation that the Department continued to enforce expired rules during intervals when the rules had lapsed is accurate. The Department continued to require that foster family homes:

- *Participate in pre-service and in-service training*
- *Have criminal and central registry background checks done*
- *Have medical checkups, and*
- *Have fire and health inspections*

These practices were continued by the Department to insure the safety and well being of the children placed in foster homes.

The Department intends to insure that its administrative rules related to foster family home licensing are maintained in effect.

The Department does not concur with the observations that without licensing rules in effect, foster family homes could not be certified for payment. RSA 170-G:4 XVII expressly provides that the Department has the power and duty to “Certify all providers of services, placements, and programs which are paid by the department pursuant to RSA 169-B:40, 169-C:27, and 169-D:29.” The Department is unaware of any authority for the proposition that action expressly authorized by statute is invalidated by the absence of rules, even where those rules are statutorily required.

LBA Rejoinder:

RSA 541-A:22, I, states “No agency rule is valid or effective against any person or party, nor may it be enforced by the state for any purpose, until it has been filed as required in this chapter.”

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 6: The DHHS Needs To Consistently Maintain Foster Family Care Licensing Rules (Continued)

Administrative rule He-C 6350.14 (b) includes foster family care as a service to be certified for payment. He-C 6350.15 requires the licensure of foster family care homes in accordance with He-C 6446, the foster family care licensing requirements, as a prerequisite of certification for payment.

The department responds that when rules were expired, the DHHS continued to require foster family homes meet various requirements. However, Observation Nos. 8 and 10 report DCYF noncompliance with foster care licensing rules.

Observation No. 7

The DHHS Needs To Consistently Maintain Rules Governing Notice, Appeals, Hearings, And Rehearings Related To Foster Parent Licensure

The DHHS failed to ensure rules governing notice, appeals, hearings, and rehearings related to foster home licensure were in effect throughout the audit period. RSA 170-E:36 requires rules be adopted under RSA 541-A to address notice, appeals, hearings, and rehearings concerning the suspension, revocation, denial, or refusal to renew a foster home's license or permit. Administrative rule He-C 6201, Fair Hearings, expired on January 26, 1996. He-C 200, which replaced He-C 6201, became effective on April 24, 1999, leaving a 39-month span during the audit period when the rules were expired.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DHHS comply with RSAs 170-E and 541-A and maintain notice, appeal, hearing, and rehearing rules to meet statutory requirements.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DHHS concurs that He-C 6201 expired on January 26, 1996 and that, following the creation in January 1997 of a centralized administrative appeals unit within DHHS, department-wide rules governing administrative hearings and appeals (He-C 200) were adopted effective April 24, 1999. During the period between the expiration of He-C 6201 and the adoption of He-C 200, the conduct of administrative hearings and appeals was regulated by the comprehensive provisions of RSA 541-A: 30-38. As noted in our response to Observation 20, case law is very clear that the expiration of substantive and procedural administrative rules is not a bar to agency action so long as there is statutory authority underlying the conduct. During the period where rules related to administrative hearings and appeals were not in place, such proceedings were conducted in a comprehensive and fair manner pursuant to the provisions of RSA 541-A.

2.6 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 8

The DCYF Should Ensure That Statutory And Rule Requirements Are Completed Before Issuing Licenses And Permits

The DCYF did not ensure that some required reviews, inspections, and training related to foster family care permitting, licensing, and relicensing were conducted. These included criminal records checks, central registry checks, fire inspections, and foster parent

training. Training was also required by the Eric L. Settlement agreement. The prevailing RSAs or administrative rules in effect during the audit period and the corresponding unmet requirements are listed in the following table:

RSA Or Rule	Unmet Requirement
RSA 170-E:29, II, and He-C 6446	Criminal background checks be completed for each applicant and household member before issuing a license or permit
RSA 170-E:29, III, and He-C 6446	Reviews of the State registry of founded abuse and neglect reports be completed for each applicant and household member before issuing a license or permit
RSA 170-E:28, I	Applications; Compliance with local codes required
He-C 6446	Foster homes be visited once before issuing a permit and twice before issuing or reissuing of a license, and that a written assessment be completed
He-C 6446	Minimum of 21 hours of pre-service training and 16 hours of in-service training every two years

We conducted a file review of all the current foster home licensing files within two DCYF district offices. In all, 76 files were reviewed from the two district offices. Each foster home licensing file reviewed contained the licensing history of that foster home. Our review examined whether the files contained documentation demonstrating that licensing and permitting requirements were met prior to the issuance of the license or permit. While some of the foster homes had been licensed for longer, our review encompassed the audit period. Our findings of noncompliance for each of the above points is outlined below.

Criminal background checks:

- In the first district office reviewed we found: all required criminal background checks were not performed in 64 percent of foster homes during the audit period, yet the homes were issued a permit or license nonetheless; four percent of licenses and permits were issued without any criminal record check being documented; and 54 percent of licenses and permits were issued or reissued before a criminal record check was completed.
- In the second district office reviewed we found: all required criminal background checks were not performed in 67 percent of foster homes during the audit period, yet the homes were issued a permit or license nonetheless; five percent of licenses and permits were issued without any criminal record check being documented; and 43 percent of licenses and permits were issued or reissued before a criminal record check was completed.

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 8: The DCYF Should Ensure That Statutory And Rule Requirements Are Completed Before Issuing Licenses And Permits (Continued)

Reviews of the central registry for founded abuse and neglect cases:

- In the first district office reviewed we found: all required central registry checks were not performed in 68 percent of foster homes during the audit period, yet the homes were issued a permit or license nonetheless; five percent of licenses and permits were issued without any central registry check ever being documented; and 51 percent of licenses and permits were issued or reissued with a beginning date before the central registry check was completed.
- In the second district office reviewed we found: all required central registry checks were not performed in 62 percent of foster homes during the audit period, yet the homes were issued a permit or license nonetheless; five percent of licenses and permits were issued without any central registry check ever being documented; and 39 percent of licenses and permits were issued or reissued with a beginning date before the central registry check was completed.

Fire code inspections:

- In the first district office reviewed we found: all required fire code reviews were not performed in 64 percent of foster homes during the audit period, yet the homes were issued a permit or license nonetheless; three percent of licenses and permits were issued without any fire code review being documented; and 51 percent of licenses and permits were issued or reissued with a beginning date before the fire code review was subsequently completed.
- In the second district office reviewed we found: all required fire code reviews were not performed in 50 percent of foster homes during the audit period, yet the homes were issued a permit or license nonetheless; eight percent of licenses and permits were issued without any fire code review being documented; and 29 percent of licenses and permits were issued or reissued with a beginning date before the fire code review was subsequently completed.

Home studies:

- In the first district office reviewed we found: 71 percent of foster homes were permitted or licensed without meeting all required in-home visits or studies; six percent of licenses and permits were issued without studies that documented any required in-home visits; and 49 percent of licenses and permits were issued or reissued with a beginning date before the in-home visit or study was actually conducted.
- In the second district office reviewed we found: 54 percent of foster homes were permitted or licensed without meeting all required in-home visits or studies; 14 percent of licenses and permits were issued without studies that documented any required in-home visits; 31 percent of licenses and permits were issued or reissued with a beginning date before the in-home visit or study was actually conducted; and 15 percent of licenses and permits were issued or reissued with an undated study, making it impossible to determine whether visits were completed timely.

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 8: The DCYF Should Ensure That Statutory And Rule Requirements Are Completed Before Issuing Licenses And Permits (Continued)

Foster parent training:

- In the first district office reviewed we found: 88 percent of foster homes received licenses without meeting all training requirements; 77 percent of licenses were issued without documentation of required training; and of the 23 percent of licenses issued where training documentation was found, 36 percent either documented insufficient training hours or did not show the number of training hours.
- In the second district office reviewed we found: all foster homes received licenses without meeting all training requirements; 59 percent of licenses were issued without required documentation of training; and of the 41 percent of licenses issued where documentation was found, 69 percent showed insufficient hours to be issued a license.

Licensing foster homes prior to the homes receiving required checks or reviews effectively creates backdated licenses. Licensing homes without completed reviews, inspections, and trainings, and not completing these in a timely manner, may create unnecessary risk to children and the State. State law does not provide for waiver of statutory precursors to licensing. Neither State law nor administrative rule permits issuing a license or permit before receiving required reports or documents, nor do they permit backdating licenses. Homes without completed reviews, inspections, and trainings do not meet the State's licensing standards. We question whether they should be licensed or certified for payment.

Federal law requires that each state place foster children in foster family homes licensed according to respective state standards in order to receive related federal funding. However, the DCYF child protection administrator and the foster care specialist reported that the federal government did not hold states to this requirement. The DCYF allowed the backdating of foster family care licenses to ensure uninterrupted funding under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act and Medicaid, even though the practice was contrary to the requirements of State law and rule.

According to the foster care specialist and the child protection administrator, backdating foster family care provider licenses was commonplace throughout the audit period. However, the DCYF director reported being unaware that licenses were being backdated. The DCYF reported it recently discontinued its backdating practice due to federal notification that licensing prerequisites must be met in order for states to be eligible for federal Title IV-E funds. A representative of the ACF reported that the backdating of licensing records is viewed as falsifying records.

Recommendation:

We recommend DCYF comply with licensing standards set forth in State and federal law as well as its own long-established rules.

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 8: The DCYF Should Ensure That Statutory And Rule Requirements Are Completed Before Issuing Licenses And Permits (Continued)

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DCYF concurs that as part of the audit process, the LBA reviewed all foster home licensing files in two of the agency's twelve district offices. However, because the observation does not clearly describe the methodology used to calculate the percentages presented, the observation provides a confusing view of DCYF compliance with the licensing requirements. We believe that the following explanation of the methodology used to calculate the percentages for each section of the observation (Reviews of the Central registry for founded abuse and neglect case, Fire code inspections, Home studies and Foster parent training) would present a clearer view of the DCYF's compliance with licensing requirements.

We conducted a file review of all the current foster home licensing files within two DCYF district offices. In all, 76 files were reviewed from the two district offices (___ from the first district office and ___ from the second district office). Each foster home licensing file reviewed contained the licensing history of that foster home. The licensing history for each home could contain a number of licensing events including an initial permit or license and the renewal(s) of a permit or license. The total number of licensing events contained in the ___ files from the first district office was ___. For the second district office, the ___ files contained a total number of ___ licensing events. Our review examined whether the files contained documentation demonstrating that permitting and licensing requirements were met prior to each licensing event (the issuance of the initial permit or license or the renewal of the permit or license). While some of the foster homes had been licensed for longer, our review encompassed the audit period. Our findings of non-compliance for each of the above points (criminal background checks, central registry checks, fire code inspections, home studies and foster parent training) is outlined below.

Criminal Background Checks:

- In the first district office we reviewed ___ files that reflected a total number of ___ licensing events (issuance of initial permit and license and renewal of permits and licenses) for which a completed criminal records check was a requirement for the licensing event. In this district office review we found that: (1) 4% of the total number of permits and licenses were issued or renewed without any criminal record check being documented; (2) 54% of the total number of permits and licenses were issued or renewed before the criminal record check was completed; and (3) 65% of the ___ files reviewed contained at least one licensing event where the required criminal record check was not performed prior to the issuance or renewal of the permit or license.*

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 8: The DCYF Should Ensure That Statutory And Rule Requirements Are Completed Before Issuing Licenses And Permits (Continued)

- *In the second district office we reviewed ___ files that reflected a total number of ___ licensing events (issuance of initial permit and license and renewal of permits and licenses) for which a completed criminal records check was a requirement for the licensing event. In this district office we found that: (1) 5% of the total number of permits and licenses were issued or renewed before the criminal records check was completed; (2) 43% of the total number of permits and licenses were issued or renewed before the criminal records check was completed; and (3) 67% of the ___ files reviewed contained at least one licensing event where the required criminal record check was not performed prior to the issuance or renewal of the permit or license.*

The content of the observation is derived from a comprehensive file review of all foster home licensing files in two district offices. The data speak for themselves. Given the existence of the “hard” data DCYF objects to the inclusion of individual comments. Of particular concern is the statement that a representative of the ACF reported that the backdating of licensing records is viewed as falsifying records”.

Observation No. 9

The DHHS Should Ensure Criminal Record Search Licensing Requirements Are Enforceable And Met

Administrative rules require that foster care license applicants and their household members undergo a criminal records search including national, state, and local crime indices. However, New Hampshire State Police officials reported that the DCYF only requested

State criminal records be examined and not those of the federal National Crime Information Center. Additionally, State Police officials reported that the Interstate Identification Index or “Triple I” check is reserved for law enforcement personnel under specific circumstances that do not include foster care licensing.

RSA 170-E:29, II, requires the DCYF to submit the names, birth dates, and addresses of applicants for foster parent licensure or relicensure to the State Police to obtain information about criminal convictions. Administrative rule He-C 6446 requires that licensing applicants and family members be subjected to criminal records searches of various indices. DCYF policy asserts that the State’s licensing standards ensure the safety and security of children in placement.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DHHS:

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 9: The DHHS Should Ensure Criminal Record Search Licensing Requirements Are Enforceable And Met (Continued)

- re-evaluate which state, national, and local criminal record searches are appropriate for and can be requested by the DCYF for foster care licensing;
- work with the New Hampshire State Police to improve communication and understanding regarding foster care licensing related criminal records search processes and terminology; and
- promulgate rules that clearly stipulate and regulate which foster care licensing criminal searches are conducted.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DHHS concurs that the statutory provisions related to criminal records checks of foster parents and household members are clear. DHHS further concurs that the administrative rules related to criminal records checks (He-C 6446.07) are confusing. The department will work with the Department of Safety to clarify the criminal records search process and terminology and will make any necessary changes to the administrative rules. Given the clarity of the underlying statutory provision authorizing criminal records check, the DHHS does not concur with the implication created by the heading of this observation that the licensing requirements related to criminal records checks are unenforceable.

LBA Rejoinder:

We make no statement regarding whether the underlying statute (RSA 170-E:29, II), is enforceable. We simply question the department's operationalization of the statute through He-C 6446.

Observation No. 10

The DCYF Needs To Issue Permits According To State Law And Administrative Rule

The DCYF failed to adhere to the State's licensing standards by inappropriately issuing extended permits to foster family home providers where good cause for the extension was not shown. Our file review of foster home licensing files in two district offices indicated that permits had been extended in every year of the audit period prior to 1999. Homes with inappropriately extended permits do not meet the State's licensing or certification for payment standards and do not meet federal requirements for reimbursement of eligible costs.

Permits were intended to be a temporary status to allow licensing requirements to be met by prospective providers or current providers who had changed their residence. RSA 170-E:31, V, and the administrative rule in effect during the audit period, specify two conditions under which permits may be issued: 1) to a new home, and 2) to a home that has physically relocated. However, statute and administrative rule require completion of

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 10: The DCYF Needs To Issue Permits According To State Law And Administrative Rule (Continued)

application forms, home visits, criminal background checks, central registry checks, and fire code reviews before permits may be issued. Permits may last no longer than six months. According to RSA 170-E:25, XII, within the six-month window permits may be renewed for good cause shown.

Neither State law nor administrative rule allow issuing a license or permit before receipt of required reports. DCYF policy states that the State's licensing standards ensure the safety and security of children in placement. Where homes do not meet licensing standards, the safety and security of children could be jeopardized.

Our file review indicated that permits were extended for homes that had not met State licensing requirements. Of the 76 foster care licensing files reviewed at two district offices, we found 13 cases where permits had been extended beyond the first six months for reasons including lack of fire inspection, lack of home visit, no central registry check, and no criminal background check. In all 13 cases, required training had not been completed. Good cause for the extension of the permits was not documented in any of the cases. In two of the 13 cases, a permit had been in effect for more than 18 months. DCYF licensing workers reported six-month permits were issued back-to-back, or extended, to allow foster homes additional time to meet licensing requirements.

The foster care specialist stated the rules concerning permits are not clearly defined. As we discussed in Observation No. 8, the DCYF's enforcement of licensing standards has been insufficient. Extended permits were issued to account for some foster homes not meeting licensing requirements. The DCYF director reported licensing inconsistencies were directly related to staffing issues.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DHHS adhere to State law and administrative rule, and license and permit homes according to established standards.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DHHS concurs that it should comply with existing statutes and administrative rules when issuing foster care permits and when extending existing permits. However, DHHS does not concur with the LBA's interpretation of the statutes and administrative rules governing the issuance and renewal of foster care permits.

RSA 170-E: 25, XII establishes the general standard for the issuance of a permit ("may be granted for a period not exceeding 6 months to agencies whose services the department finds are needed, but which are temporarily unable to conform to the qualifications for a license") and for the extension of a permit ("which shall not be renewable except for good cause shown"). In addition to the general standard set forth in RSA 170-E: 25, XII, RSA 170-E:

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 10: The DCYF Needs To Issue Permits According To State Law And Administrative Rule (Continued)

31, V provides specific authorization for the issuance of a permit to a newly established facility or to a facility that has changed its physical location. In the foster family care licensing rules adopted in July 2000, DHHS added additional language to clarify the statutory provisions related to the issuance and renewal of permits. He-C 6446.14(l) states:

Pursuant to RSA 170-E: 31, V, a permit for foster family care may be issued to an applicant to allow the applicant and the foster family home to comply with the requirements of RSA 170-E and He-C 6446.03-.12 or to a foster parent to allow the foster parent to comply with the requirements of He-C 6446.15 for renewal. A permit issued pursuant to this subparagraph may be renewed for one 6-month period.

Under these standards a permit could issue to an applicant who has complied with the requirements of He-C 6446.03-.12 or to a licensed foster parent who changes his/her residence or who may require additional time to otherwise comply with the requirements of He-C 6446.15 for renewal of the license. Further, a permit may be renewed for anyone to whom it has been issued for one period of 6 months upon a showing of good cause.

To the extent that the observation implies a narrower standard for the issuance of permits (“Permits were intended to be a temporary status to allow licensing requirements to be met by prospective providers or current providers who changed their residence” and “six-month permits were reportedly issued back-to-back, or extended, to allow foster homes additional time to meet licensing requirements in state statute and administrative rule”), DHHS does not concur, believing that such interpretation is incorrect as a matter of law.

DHHS does not concur that permitted homes cannot be certified for payment under state law.

The DCYF foster care specialist takes issue with the characterization of her remarks as set forth in the last paragraph of the observation. She believes that the current administrative rules clearly define the standards governing the issuance and extension of permits. DHHS believes that the second sentence of the last paragraph (which begins, “As we discussed in Observations 8...”) should be deleted as redundant.

LBA Rejoinder:

The focus of our observation is the DCYF practice of permitting foster parents during the audit period of FY 1993 – FY 2000. Our discussion of rules, and the inclusion of the foster care specialist’s comments, are directed to the DHHS rules throughout our audit period.

Our observation mentions that homes “with inappropriately extended permits do not meet the State’s licensing or certification for payment standards...”; it does not report that “permitted homes cannot be certified for payment under state law.”

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 11

The DCYF Needs To Maintain Foster Children In Appropriately Licensed And Permitted Homes

Our file reviews of two district offices revealed that the DCYF, for several months at a time, maintained some foster children in foster family homes with expired licenses. The DCYF foster care specialist acknowledged that some foster children “on a given day” were in foster family homes with expired licenses, but that the DCYF was unable to tell how many children were affected during the audit period. Our analysis of a DCYF BRIDGES report run for a single day in October 1999 indicated that up to 124 foster children from 11 of 12 district offices were in unpermitted or unlicensed homes, and up to 191 homes from all district offices were not permitted or licensed.

RSA 170-E:27, I, prohibits any person not licensed or permitted in accordance with RSA 170-E from operating a child care agency, to include a foster home. According to RSA 170-E:45, I and III, anyone who conducts, operates, or acts as a foster home without a license or permit shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and each day a violation exists is considered a separate offense. RSA 170-E:45, II, exempts foster family parents from this penalty for no more than 30 days when asked by a child placing agency to accept an emergency placement. Also, DHHS compliance requirements for certification for payment require that foster family care homes be licensed according to State licensing requirements.

The DCYF disregarded foster family home permitting, licensing, and relicensing standards and allowed foster children to remain in placement in unlicensed and unpermitted foster family homes, contrary to State law. The DCYF allowed foster care reimbursement payments to foster family home providers that were not certified for payment.

The DCYF child protection administrator reported that foster parents whose licenses expired “know” that the DCYF would not remove foster children from foster homes. The DCYF would do little to compel foster parents to complete relicensing requirements on time, even though the DCYF could have issued orders to comply to foster parents who failed to timely forward required relicensing information. Instead, the DCYF reissued licenses or extended permits to foster parents who did not submit required information on time, and backdated licenses if the required material was subsequently received. The foster care specialist stated the division felt that foster children in homes with expired licenses were not at risk. Also, the DCYF did not want to move foster children from homes with expired licenses if the children had been in the home for an extended period of time and the division felt the child had achieved stability.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the DCYF ensure foster children are in foster family homes according to State law and administrative rule. The DCYF should adhere to DHHS rules requiring that foster family care homes receiving reimbursement payments be compliant with certification for payment standards.

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 11: The DCYF Needs To Maintain Foster Children In Appropriately Licensed And Permitted Homes (Continued)

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART: DHHS concurs that the file reviews conducted as part of the audit process showed that DCYF permitted a small number of children to remain in foster family homes after the licenses or permits had expired. To the extent that the observation suggests that children were placed in or allowed to remain in homes that had never been permitted or licensed, DHHS does not concur.

DHHS has taken significant steps to address the issue of children being placed or remaining in foster homes after the expiration of licenses or permits. As noted below, these efforts have produced substantial improvement on this issue. DCYF's ability to monitor placement of children in unlicensed and unpermitted homes was enhanced by the production of reports generated from the Bridges case management system. These reports begin in 1999 and were one of the first management reports generated by Bridges.

As an initial report of unpermitted and unlicensed homes (expired), the DCYF does not disagree with the numbers stated in the observation that one day in October 1999, there were 124 children in unlicensed or unpermitted and unlicensed homes foster homes. Based on its experience with this issue, DCYF believes that the vast majority of these children resided in foster homes where the license or permit had expired and that the licensed was in the process of being renewed. DCYF reports of the numbers of children in unlicensed and unpermitted homes for October 10, 2000 showed 65 children placed in 40 unlicensed, unpermitted (expired) foster homes. A similar report for April 2, 2001, showed that there were 27 children placed in 19 unlicensed and unpermitted (expired) foster homes. This consistent monitoring of foster home license status has contributed to the reduction of children placed in unlicensed and unpermitted (expired foster homes).

LBA Rejoinder:

Based on DCYF license and permit data, 16 percent of the children in care on the October 1999 day the report was generated were in an unlicensed or unpermitted home. We question whether it would be appropriate for the DHHS to consider 16 percent of foster children as a small number.

Furthermore, DCYF placement data indicated that, on the date of the October 1999 report, 61 of 185 permitted homes had been permitted for more than one year. There were 117 children in 86 permitted homes, 38 of them residing in homes that had been permitted for more than one year.

Our observation does not state that the DCYF placed children in foster homes that have never been permitted or licensed. However, information we obtained from our survey of current DCYF foster parents (Appendix A) indicated that eight homes had children placed in their homes prior to receiving a permit. DCYF

2.5 Licensing (Continued)

Observation No. 11: The DCYF Needs To Maintain Foster Children In Appropriately Licensed And Permitted Homes (Continued)

permit and license data indicated that one child was in care in a home with an expired PIC agreement. District office licensing files indicated that: 1) one provider with an expired permit, and who had not met all the permitting requirements at the time the permit was issued, was providing respite care; 2) two homes with expired PIC agreements had children in care; and 3) one home with an expired, backdated permit provided respite and general foster care for at least three children - one for five months, and this provider had unmet licensing requirements 13 months after the permit expired.

Information developed during the audit period does not support the DHHS contention that foster home license status was consistently monitored during the audit period.

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
FOSTER FAMILY CARE**

SUPPORT OF FOSTER PARENTS

Support to foster parents comes through direct contact with agency personnel and possibly through other foster parents. The DCYF began issuing another key resource in January 1999 to licensed foster parents: the *Foster Parent Handbook*. This handbook defines the DCYF's expectations for foster parents when working with a respective foster child's family, caring for foster children, and working with the DCYF. The handbook also provides financial information and identifies community resources, emergency procedures, and important telephone numbers. Prior to the handbook, the DCYF provided foster parents with a booklet entitled *Foster Parenthood...A Guide For Licensed Foster Parents*.

The DCYF also provides support to foster parents through training, reimbursement payments, administrative rules defining the expectations the agency has of foster parents, ongoing communication and contact with district office personnel. Sufficient support is critical to ensure that foster family parents have adequate and appropriate resources to properly care for foster children. The support that foster family care providers receive and the way it is delivered may impact: 1) care provided to foster children, 2) retention of foster family parents by the DCYF, 3) future recruitment efforts by the DCYF, and 4) foster family care system expenses.

3.1 Foster Parent Rights

According to the Foster Parent Handbook, as licensed providers of foster family care, foster parents have limited rights regarding the child in their home and legal standing in court. However, each foster parent should expect to be provided with:

1. information about the child to enable the foster parents to decide about accepting the child into their family,
2. the right to refuse placement of a child for whom the foster parents believe they cannot adequately provide,
3. a case plan for the child,
4. an invitation to participate in the child's administrative review,
5. a clear understanding of the foster parents' role in the child's care,
6. board and care payment,
7. medical coverage for the child,
8. training and education opportunities,
9. liability insurance, and
10. continuation of family routines.

3.2 Monetary Support To Foster Family Parents

The DCYF provides reimbursement to foster family parents for foster child-related expenses according to the type of foster care provided. Daily reimbursement rates for general and specialized foster care including daily clothing allowance during State fiscal years 1994, 1998, 1999, and 2000, are listed in Table 3. There were no reimbursement rate changes during fiscal years 1995, 1996, and 1997. It should be noted that the annual clothing allowance included in the daily rate for fiscal year 2000 totaled \$274.

Table 3

General And Specialized Home Daily Reimbursement Rates*				
Type Foster Care/Age Group	FY 94 (\$)	FY 98 (\$)	FY 99 (\$)	FY 00 (\$)
General / 0-5 years old	10.98	11.53	12.15	12.65
General / 6-11 years old	11.91	12.51	13.18	13.71
General / 12-17 years old	13.97	14.67	15.45	16.05
Specialized / 0-5 years old	16.22	17.04	17.94	18.61
Specialized / 6-11 years old	17.62	18.52	19.48	20.20
Specialized / 12-17 years old	20.70	21.74	22.87	23.69

* Include clothing allowance.

Source: LBA analysis of available DCYF information.

Foster family care providers may receive supplemental foster care reimbursements, which are additional reimbursements to foster parents for foster children who require greater than customary levels of care. Table 4 shows supplemental foster care daily rates by level for fiscal years 1994, 1998, 1999, and 2000.

Table 4

Supplemental Care Daily Reimbursement Rates				
Supplemental Care Level	FY 94 (\$)	FY 98 (\$)	FY 99(\$)	FY 00(\$)
Level 1	5.71	6.00	6.30	6.49
Level 2	11.41	11.98	12.58	12.96
Level 3	17.12	17.98	18.88	19.45
Level 4	34.23	35.94	37.74	38.87

Source: LBA analysis of available DCYF information.

Some foster care providers are specifically licensed as emergency foster parents. They provide emergency 24-hour foster care services for up to 10 days. Emergency homes serve when other foster care is unavailable or when little is known about a child. Table 5 shows emergency foster home care daily reimbursement rates; the rates also include a clothing allowance.

3.2 Monetary Support To Foster Family Parents (Continued)

Table 5

Emergency Home Daily Reimbursement Rates				
Emergency Care Age Group	FY 94 (\$)	FY 98 (\$)	FY 99 (\$)	FY 00 (\$)
0-5 years old	26.93	28.28	29.69	30.58
6-11 years old	26.93	28.28	29.69	30.58
12-17 years old	26.93	28.28	29.69	30.58

Source: LBA analysis of available DCYF information.

Crisis foster homes are a specialized subset of licensed emergency foster homes. They are contracted by the State to keep open beds for emergency placements of children, primarily by law enforcement, when district offices are closed. A crisis home may provide care to a child for up to five business days. Each home receives \$300 per month to hold open a bed, and a per diem payment for days that actual care is provided to a child. Note that children served by these homes are not yet considered foster children. The daily reimbursement rate, which includes a clothing allowance reimbursement, is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Crisis Home Daily Reimbursement Rates				
Crisis Care Age Group	FY 94 (\$)	FY 98 (\$)	FY 99 (\$)	FY 00 (\$)
0-5 years old	31.44	33.01	34.66	35.70
6-11 years old	31.44	33.01	34.66	35.70
12-17 years old	31.44	33.01	34.66	35.70

Source: LBA analysis of available DCYF information.

Also, the DCYF reported that therapeutic foster family care providers receive \$50 per day reimbursement.

Foster family care providers may seek and receive other related reimbursements. The respite care reimbursement rate is \$25 per day. The private vehicle reimbursement rate, for mileage for transporting foster children to and from family supportive and strengthening services, is \$0.29 per mile. Also, there is a maximum initial clothing allotment reimbursement of \$50 per child.

Under RSA 169-C:27, the DHHS is liable for incurred service, placement, and program expenses. Personnel reported the DCYF pays all foster care medical expenses. DCYF personnel reported there is a new foster child health care project involving registered nurses practiced in pediatrics. The program began in Manchester then expanded to Keene and Claremont. This project is to assure foster children receive the same medical care level as non-foster children.

Our 1993 performance audit report included two findings related to statutory noncompliance; the DHHS lacked required foster family home compensation rules, and the then-named Division for Children and Youth Services (DCYS) rate setter did not meet with the DHHS advisory board. We found these areas of noncompliance still continued. We also found that the DCYF needs to improve its reimbursement level of foster family care

3.2 Monetary Support To Foster Family Parents (Continued)

provider expenses, as well as improve the timeliness and accuracy of its payments to providers.

Observation No. 12

The DHHS Needs Foster Family Home Compensation Rules

The DHHS never established rate setting rules for compensating foster family homes, as required by RSA 170-G:4, XVII, effective July 25, 1987. We also observed this deficiency in

our 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit. We question whether the department could enforce foster care reimbursement standards without duly adopted rules.

RSA 170-E:34, I (f), requires the DHHS to develop rules for foster family home compensation. RSA 170-G:4, XVII, grants DCYF the “power and duty” to establish rates for all services, placements, and programs paid by the department pursuant to court orders. RSA 170-G:4, XVII-a, requires these rates be reviewed annually. In order to carry out the department’s responsibilities, administrative rules must be adopted in accordance with RSA 541-A.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the DHHS promulgate rules regarding compensation to foster family homes for the costs of caring for each child placed in their home. We further recommend that the DCYF review these rates annually as required by State law.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DHHS believes that pursuant to RSA 170-G:4, XVII it has the responsibility to establish rates for foster family care. During the period covered by the audit, rates for all levels of foster care have been in place and have reflected the following increases authorized in the department’s budget as enacted by the General Court and signed by the Governor: 5% (10/1/97), 5% (10/1/98), 3% (10/1/99), and 3% (10/1/00). While the department concurs that it has a responsibility to establish rules pursuant to RSA 170-E:34, I (f) and acknowledges that such rules have not been established, it does not concur that the failure to adopt rules renders the department unable to “enforce” foster care reimbursement standards. The department does not enforce rates. Its enforcement of standards for foster care providers is covered by licensing and payment certification rules. The department hopes to begin the process of promulgating rules pursuant to RSA 170-E: 34, I (f) by July 1, 2001.

3.2 Monetary Support To Foster Family Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 13

The DCYF Rate Setter Should Consult With The DHHS Advisory Board

RSA 170-G:4, XVII requires that the department establish rates for programs and services after consultation with the DHHS advisory board. The rate setter does not meet

with the board and was unaware of its existence. In our 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit report, we observed that the rate setter of the then-named DCYS did not meet with the advisory board. The DCYS responded that it would “request statutory change to delete the requirement”, yet the responsibility remains; amendments of 1995 direct the board to advise the DHHS.

Recommendation:

We again recommend that the DHHS should reevaluate the requirement for rate setter consultation with the DHHS advisory board. If the requirement is valid, the rate setter should comply. If not, the department should request statutory change to delete the requirement.

Auditee Response:

DHHS concurs that the rate setter does not consult with the DHHS Advisory Board. HB-501 was introduced in the 2001 legislative session at the request of the department to address several issues identified by the LBA that required statutory change. HB-501 has been signed by the Governor. Effective 8/25/01 it repeals that portion of RSA 170-G: 4, XVII that requires consultation with the advisory board.

Observation No. 14

The DCYF Should Reexamine Reimbursement Of Foster Family Care Provider Expenses

The DCYF has not adopted standards to determine whether reimbursement rates paid to foster family care providers are adequate. The director reported that the DCYF established a rate years ago and left

subsequent increases to the Legislature. The DCYF reported that the Legislature set foster family care reimbursement rates and increased all residential rates by five percent in both 1998 and 1999, and by three percent in 2000. The DCYF finance administrator reported that, because the rate setting rules had expired, providers received across-the-board flat percentage daily reimbursement rate increases the past three years. Our review of DHHS budget documents indicated that no specific request to increase foster family care reimbursement rates was made during the audit period.

The DCYF director, the child protection administrator, the foster care specialist, the financial administrator, and other division staff reported that reimbursement was insufficient to meet the needs of foster children. DCYF policy states that foster parent reimbursement rates “cover customary care of children including the cost of food, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, and a child’s personal incidentals.” However, the DCYF

3.2 Monetary Support To Foster Family Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 14: The DCYF Should Reexamine Reimbursement Of Foster Family Care Provider Expenses (Continued)

does not periodically determine whether these rates cover the cost of customary care. Federal law defines foster care maintenance payments as “payments to cover the cost of (and the cost of providing) food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, a child’s personal incidentals, liability insurance with respect to a child, and reasonable travel to the child’s home for visitation.” The DCYF reported that foster care reimbursements are shared 50-50 between the State and federal government for eligible placements; the State’s half is split 75-25 between the State and counties.

The foster care specialist and the DCYF Comprehensive Child and Family Services Plan for years 2000-2004 reported considering raising DCYF foster care reimbursement rates to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimated expenditures on children by families. The USDA estimated per child expenditures based on three levels of a husband-wife family’s before-tax income:

- Income Level 1 = less than \$38,000 (Average \$23,800);
- Income Level 2 = between \$38,000 - \$64,000 (Average \$50,600);
- Income Level 3 = more than \$64,000 (Average \$95,800).

To provide a frame of reference, a comparison between the fiscal year 2000 DCYF foster care reimbursement rates and the USDA estimated daily per child expenditures at income level 2 is outlined in Table 7. The USDA rate has been modified to remove health care costs (The DCYF reports all health care costs are fully reimbursable under Medicaid.) and child care and education expenses through age 12. Foster parents may be reimbursed for child care costs under a number of conditions including full-time care when a foster parent must work, provided the service is court ordered.

Table 7

Comparison Of Fiscal Year 2000 DCYF General Foster Home Daily Reimbursement Rates And USDA Estimated Daily Per Child Expenditures			
Age Range	DCYF Rate *	Level 2	
		USDA Estimate	DCYF Rate As Percent Of USDA Estimate
0-2	\$12.65	\$18.77	67%
3-5	\$12.65	\$19.10	66%
6-8	\$13.71	\$20.36	67%
9-11	\$13.71	\$20.96	65%
12-14	\$16.05	\$24.66	65%
15-17	\$16.05	\$25.01	64%

* Includes DCYF general foster care board and care reimbursement rates plus the DCYF clothing allowance of \$0.75 per day.

Source: LBA analysis of DCYF and USDA data.

3.2 Monetary Support To Foster Family Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 14: The DCYF Should Reexamine Reimbursement Of Foster Family Care Provider Expenses (Continued)

DCYF reimbursements to general foster family care providers were lower than each of the modified level 2 USDA per child expenditure estimates for fiscal year 2000. Thirty-two percent of current DCYF foster parents who responded to our mail survey (Appendix A) agreed that general foster care reimbursement rates were sufficient, 45 percent disagreed, and 24 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. Additionally, 29 percent of the respondents to our mail survey of past DCYF foster parents (Appendix C) reported inadequate foster care reimbursements as a reason they stopped foster parenting. In our 1993 Child Settlement Program audit report, over 21 percent of foster parent mail survey respondents identified “insufficient compensation rates” as a major problem; 25 percent said increased compensation would improve foster parent retention.

The fiscal year 2000 initial clothing allotment, allowed once for a child’s initial placement into foster family care, was a maximum of \$50. The daily clothing allowance, allowed for each day a child is in foster family care, is \$0.75, or \$274 per year. The director, child protection administrator, other DCYF personnel, and private agency staff stated that the DCYF clothing allowance was inadequate. Seventy-nine percent of current DCYF foster parent respondents to our mail survey (Appendix A) disagreed the clothing allowance was sufficient; of these, 46 percent strongly disagreed the clothing allowance was sufficient.

The foster care specialist was greatly concerned with the foster family care system reimbursement rates. The child protection administrator, other DCYF staff, and an official from the NHFAPA stated that low foster care reimbursement rates affected the quality of DCYF foster care. Foster care licensing workers reported satisfied foster parents bring in new foster parents but dissatisfied foster parents may cause recruitment and retention problems. Additionally, foster parents may exit the DCYF foster care system to work for private agencies that provide higher daily reimbursement rates.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DHHS meet its statutory obligations to:

- **Determine and seek current, adequate foster care reimbursement rates, to include general and specialized board and care rates and clothing allowance rates.**
- **Promulgate rules for reimbursement to foster family care providers for the costs of (and the cost of providing) food, clothing, shelter, daily supervision, school supplies, a foster child’s personal incidentals, liability insurance with respect to a foster child, and reasonable travel to a foster child’s biological parent’s home for visitation.**

3.2 Monetary Support To Foster Family Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 14: The DCYF Should Reexamine Reimbursement Of Foster Family Care Provider Expenses (Continued)

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART: DHHS concurs that foster parents should be adequately reimbursed for the valuable services they provide to New Hampshire's children. DHHS believes that the General Court should provide the additional funds necessary to enable DHHS to further increase the foster care rates.

DHHS does not concur that it has failed to increase foster care rates. While the LBA statement "[O]ur review of DHHS budget documents showed that no specific request to increase foster family care reimbursement rates was made during the audit period" may be technically correct, it is misleading. Foster parent reimbursement increases were included in provider payment increases during the audit period. Foster care rates have reflected the following increases authorized in the department's budget as enacted by the General Court and signed by the Governor: 5% (10/1/97); 5% (10/1/98); 3% (10/1/99) and 3% (10/1/00). In addition, in SFY 2000 the clothing allowance for foster children was increased 25% from \$.60 per day to \$.75 per day. Finally, beginning in November 2000, foster children receive an annual special occasion allowance that can be used by the foster parent for the child's clothing or miscellaneous expenses. The annual amount of the special occasion allowance varies between \$150 and \$225 depending upon the age of the child. In closing this discussion of reimbursement rates we note that the ability of the department to increase rates for foster parents and other providers of residential and community-based services is completely dependent on the General Court's willingness to commit resources to provider rate increases.

In presenting the USDA standards the LBA states that "the DCYF Comprehensive Child and Family Services Plan for the years 2000-2004 reported considering raising DCYF foster care reimbursement rates to... USDA estimated expenditures on children by families. Although indicating that DCYF was exploring the feasibility of utilizing the USDA standard, the LBA observation criticizes the DCYF as though it had adopted the USDA figures as its standards and then had failed to meet them.

LBA Rejoinder:

The focus of the observation is DCYF reimbursement of foster family care expenses during the eight year FY 1993 - FY 2000 audit period. We note that the DCYF had no annual special occasion allowance in place during the audit period. Nor did the DCYF report increases in foster care reimbursement rates during the first five years of the audit period.

We reiterate what we stated in the observation: USDA data are "To provide a frame of reference...."

3.3 Monetary Support To Foster Family Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 15

<i>Improvement Needed In DCYF Reimbursement Procedures</i>

The timeliness and accuracy of DCYF reimbursement to foster family care providers continues to need improvement. An observation we made in our 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit report also discussed the problem of late payments to foster parents.

DCYF district office foster home recruitment and retention plans acknowledge difficulty with payments to foster care service providers. Two district office plans reported a need to have more expedient payments for board and care, respite care, and in-home care costs. Our analysis of DCYF Bureau of Quality Improvement surveys of DCYF foster parents from four district offices indicated that 74 percent of respondents were satisfied with the timeliness of foster care subsidy payments, and 26 percent were dissatisfied. According to the president of the NHFAPA, untimely or inaccurate payments can frustrate foster parents and cause financial hardship. District office recruitment and retention reports noted untimely or inaccurate payments negatively affect retention. Twenty-seven percent of former DCYF foster parents responding to our mail survey (Appendix C) indicated that one reason they left fostering was due to problems with timely payments.

In response to our mail survey of current DCYF foster parents (Appendix A), 68 percent agreed that payments were timely, 16 percent disagreed, and 16 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. Ninety-three percent of current private child placing agency foster parents responding to our mail survey (Appendix B) agreed that payments were timely, four percent disagreed, and four percent neither agreed nor disagreed. Responses to our mail survey of former DCYF foster parents (Appendix C) indicated 63 percent agreed that payments were made timely, 27 percent disagreed, and ten percent neither agreed nor disagreed. In contrast, our survey of former child placing agency foster parents (Appendix D) indicated that all respondents to this question agreed that their payments were timely.

Responses from current DCYF (Appendix A) and child placing agency (Appendix B) foster parents to questions regarding their satisfaction with other aspects of payments also indicated significant contrasts between DCYF handling of payments and child placing agency handling of payments.

The responses summarized in Table 8 indicate that child placing agency (CPA) foster parents generally viewed their agency's handling of payments more favorably than did DCYF foster parents.

3.2 Monetary Support To Foster Family Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 15: Improvement Needed In DCYF Reimbursement Procedures (Continued)

Table 8

Current DCYF And CPA Foster Parent Satisfaction With Handling Of Payments						
Number of times payment was late in a year?						
Entity	Never	One Or Two	Three Or Four	Four To Six	More than Six	
DCYF	30%	41%	14%	8%	8%	
CPA	74%	19%	4%	0%	4%	
How late were payments?						
Entity	Three Days Or Less	Four To Six Days	One To Two Weeks	Two Weeks To One Month	One To Two Months	Over Two Months
DCYF	8%	20%	36%	28%	4%	4%
CPA	71%	14%	14%	0%	0%	0%
How many times in a year was an inaccurate payment received?						
Entity	Never	Once Or Twice	Twice To Three	More Than Three		
DCYF	66%	23%	8%	3%		
CPA	74%	26%	0%	0%		

Source: LBA survey of current DCYF (Appendix A) and private child placing agency (Appendix B) foster parents.

Problems with payments for respite care, supplemental foster care, provisional interim care, general foster care, and crisis or emergency care were evident in foster parent files and in survey responses from DCYF foster parents. Fifteen percent of current DCYF foster parents (Appendix A), but no current child placing agency foster parents (Appendix B), responded that payment problems were not corrected timely.

The DCYF has not adopted criteria for ensuring timely payment to foster parents in policy and procedure. A summary of DCYF procedures provided by the financial administrator specifies that providers should receive a check two weeks after the State office receives an invoice, and details the process for payment. However, this timeframe has not been formalized in policy or procedure. Additionally, no DCYF policies and procedures, to include the Foster Parent Handbook, address the forms required for payment and the procedures required to complete such forms.

As we noted in Observation No. 4, inadequacies in training may contribute to foster parents playing a role in delayed or inaccurate payments. DCYF foster care licensing workers delivered pre-service training on policies, procedures, and forms. However, some current DCYF foster parents responding to our mail survey (Appendix A) expressed concern with this training as outlined in Table 9.

3.2 Monetary Support To Foster Family Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 15: Improvement Needed In DCYF Reimbursement Procedures (Continued)

Table 9

Current DCYF Foster Parent Concern With Forms Training			
My pre-service training provided me sufficient understanding of:	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree
How to fill out payment forms	56%	19%	25%

Source: LBA survey of current DCYF foster parents (Appendix A).

Recommendation:

We recommend the DCYF:

- **Adopt and implement policies and procedures addressing the payment process and ensure staff adhere to it.**
- **Develop customer service criteria for timeliness of payments and timely correction of errors, and ensure these criteria are met.**
- **Revise its foster parent handbook to include blank and sample forms required of foster parents and instructions on completing these forms.**
- **Revise its pre-service training curriculum to emphasize accurate form completion and enforce pre-service training requirements to ensure prospective foster parents understand how to complete forms required for payment.**

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. We concur that there is room for improvement in the timeliness and accuracy of DCYF reimbursement payments to foster family care providers. We note that although the observation contains inconsistent data from a number of sources (mail surveys of samples of current and former foster parents, LBA analysis of DCYF Bureau of Quality Improvement district office reviews, and LBA review of foster care files in one district office), overall the data suggest that 70% of foster parents agree that DCYF reimbursement payments are timely. The current payment process for foster parent reimbursement has a number of steps starting with the submission of an invoice for board and care by the foster parent to the Bureau of Data Management for processing. The expeditious processing of these invoices is dependent upon adequate staffing levels in the bureau. The present hiring freeze has adversely affected this work in the past. In addition, reimbursement for respite care and in-home care requires the provider to complete a service authorization which, if a court order exists for the service, must first be transmitted to the county for payment and is then transmitted to the Bureau of Data Management.

During the audit period DCYF implemented an automated voice response system to provide accurate up-to-date information about billing and claims payment to all DCYF providers, including foster parents. In addition, DCYF anticipates the implementation of an

3.2 Monetary Support To Foster Family Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 15: Improvement Needed In DCYF Reimbursement Procedures (Continued)

automated foster parent payment system by August 1, 2001. This system will automatically pay foster parents for the children in their home and thus will eliminate the requirement that foster parents complete and submit board and care invoices. In addition, we anticipate that the automated payment system will reduce error as it will require current service codes and will interface with Bridges information on the age of the child.

While we concur that the data presented in this observation indicate significant contrasts between the timeliness and accuracy of DCYF payments to foster parents and payments by private child placing agencies to their foster parents, we do not believe it is appropriate directly or by implication to criticize DCYF for failing to achieve the same level of timeliness and accuracy as do private child placing agencies. Private child placing agencies provide specialized foster care services to a small number of children whose therapeutic needs can not be met within the levels of foster care provided by DCYF. In addition, the majority of child placing agencies automatically pay their foster parents directly and then the agency processes the board and care invoices to obtain reimbursement from DCYF.

Finally, this observation references data from a number of LBA mail surveys of foster parents: (1) current DCYF foster parents; (2) current private agency foster parents; (3) former DCYF foster parents and (4) former private agency foster parents.

With regard to the surveys of current and former DCYF foster parents we note the following:

- At its request DHHS provided the LBA with the names and addresses of approximately 900 former DCYF foster parents. According to Appendix C, the LBA sent written surveys to 63 of these former foster parents and received replies from 35. Appendix C does not indicate how the 63 were chosen or whether the 35 respondents were a representative group.*
- At its request DHHS provided the LBA with the names and addresses of approximately 750 current DCYF foster parents. According to Appendix A, the LBA sent written surveys to 63 of these current DCYF foster parents and received replies from 40. Appendix A does not indicate how the 63 were chosen or whether the 40 respondents were a representative group.*
- DHHS does not know the total number of current and former private agency foster parents but notes that according to Appendix B surveys were sent to 49 current private agency foster parents and replies received from 28. According to Appendix D surveys were sent to 34 former private agency foster parents and replies received from 16.*

3.3 Programmatic Support Of Foster Parents

DCYF district office personnel are critical resources for foster family providers. The DCYF provides the following support services to foster parents: 1) pre-service and in-service training; 2) child care for foster children while foster parents work; 3) child care allowances for foster parents who attend DCYF- or CLL-sponsored training only, and the NHFAPA conference; 4) 14 paid days of respite care annually; 5) liability insurance; 6) legal fee insurance; 7) board and care reimbursement payments; and 8) annual foster child clothing reimbursement allowance.

CPSWs and JPPOs manage foster family care cases, and should team effectively with foster parents, as well as provide support to foster parents and children in placements. These personnel may be the primary resource for foster parents who have questions or concerns about foster parenting issues, including emergency situations. Also, new foster parents may need greater and more rapid district office support than seasoned foster parents. Foster parents needing to contact the DCYF may make inquiries to the respective case worker and foster care licensing worker during normal DCYF working hours via voice or electronic mail.

Personnel managing foster child family service cases are required by the Eric L. settlement and DCYF policy to visit each foster child at their respective foster home once per month. They also must develop foster child case plans and provide them to foster parents. Foster care licensing workers are required to conduct licensing visits, foster parent pre-service training, and provide support.

Lack of responsiveness to foster parents and inadequate oversight may lead to: 1) foster parent frustration, 2) adversarial relationships with the DCYF, 3) foster parents exiting the foster care system, and 4) inappropriate care for foster children.

The Eric L. settlement required that the DCYF hire a consultant to evaluate its recruitment and retention efforts. The Adams-Mathews report issued in 1998 reported that 5 of 21 respondents to a DCYF survey of exiting foster parents “left clearly because of problems working with the agency.” The consultants’ report acknowledged that DCYF data was limited and not statistically significant. It also reported that focus groups and telephone interviews with foster parents provided information largely consistent with the exit interviews and studies. The evaluation further reported “tremendous concern” regarding deficiencies with teamwork, communication, and involvement in child planning, and that foster parents desired basic respect from the agency.

We found that the DCYF needs improvement in the following areas: making required monthly in-home visits to foster children, responding to foster family parents, and providing adequate after-business hours and weekend emergency contact. Our 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit report questioned caseworker responsiveness to foster parents and visitation of foster children at foster homes.

3.3 Programmatic Support Of Foster Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 16

The DCYF Needs To Make Required Monthly In-Home Visits To Foster Family Children

CPSWs for the DCYF do not visit each foster family child in their respective foster home on a monthly basis as required in the mutually agreed to and binding Eric L. Settlement Agreement. DCYF's director, the Eric L.

monitor, two child protection service supervisors, one assessment supervisor, one former CPSW coordinator, and BQI reviews reported noncompliance with this requirement. Additionally, DCYF-issued Eric L. monitoring reports revealed noncompliance with the in-home visitation requirement as did reports of the Eric L. Oversight Panel.

Our analysis of BQI review data from four district offices indicated that monthly in-home visits occurred between nine and 37 percent of the time. Only 41 percent of the former DCYF foster parents who responded to our mail survey (Appendix C) indicated that in-home visits occurred monthly, while 22 percent of respondents said CPSWs averaged longer than nine months to make a single in-home visit. Thirty-eight percent of current DCYF foster parents responding to our survey (Appendix A) indicated in-home visits occurred monthly. Sixteen percent of the respondents said CPSWs averaged longer than nine months to make a single in-home visit.

We recommended in our 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit report that the division adopt a monthly visitation policy for children in foster care that reflected current professional standards. In the Eric L. Settlement Agreement, effective on September 1, 1997, the DCYF agreed to, no later than June 1, 1998, implement delivery of "A requirement that the CPSW assigned to a family service case in which the child is placed in an in-state foster home visit the child in the foster home at least monthly." Division policy, adopted May 1, 1998, implemented this requirement. DCYF management including the director, the Eric L. monitor, and the child protection administrator, acknowledge that the Agreement represents best practice. The Agreement is binding on DCYF and its employees, however the Agreement did not affect juvenile probation and parole foster home placements.

The DCYF director, the child protection administrator, a State-office program specialist, two CPSW supervisors, one assessment supervisor, and the Eric L. monitor indicated that they were aware of the deficiency, but reported that caseloads and staffing levels have prevented compliance with this requirement. DCYF management and CPSWs indicated additional burdens preventing compliance included workload issues, the requirement to use the BRIDGES case management system, training requirements, and other administrative requirements.

The DCYF director acknowledges that noncompliance could place the State in jeopardy of possible further legal action. Additionally, failing to visit children regularly in their foster home environment reduces the division's oversight of the foster placement and home, potentially placing the child and foster family at unnecessary risk. It also can lead to foster parent burnout and frustration.

3.3 Programmatic Support Of Foster Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 16: The DCYF Needs To Make Required Monthly In-Home Visits To Foster Family Children (Continued)

Recommendation:

We recommend the DCYF take necessary steps to meet the monthly in-home visit requirement in the Eric L. Settlement Agreement and in its own policy.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. The Eric L. law suit was a class action against the DHHS which was settled by agreement among the parties. The DHHS' obligations under the settlement agreement are contractual in nature and are not imposed by statute, administrative rule or court decree. Pursuant to the terms of the settlement agreement, the DCYF was to adopt and implement policy which requires family service workers to make monthly in-home visits to foster family children. The DCYF timely adopted this policy, but acknowledges that due to increasing case loads and inadequate staffing it has had difficulty implementing this provision of the agreement. The DCYF's lack of resources necessary to comply with the terms of the settlement agreement, has been recognized by both the Eric L. monitor and the Eric L. oversight panel. The DCYF has, and will continue to seek the resources necessary to fulfill this obligation. DCYF emphasizes that the ultimate authority on the availability of additional resources rests not with the DHHS but with the General Court.

The observation raises the specter of further legal action due to the DHHS' noncompliance with the settlement agreement in Eric L.. We note that the agreement, however, permits further legal action only when the parties' good faith efforts to resolve differences have failed, and after the parties have submitted to mediation or arbitration.

Observation No. 17

The DCYF Needs To Improve Responsiveness To Foster Family Parents' Calls

The DCYF does not consistently provide timely response to foster parents' telephone calls during business hours. The LBA made a similar observation in our 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit report.

DCYF policy places responsibility for responding to foster family care parents on the case manager, whether it is a CPSW or JPPO. Foster parents are instructed by the DCYF's foster parent handbook to first contact the case manager with routine or emergency issues. The case manager's supervisor, the on-call worker, or the foster care licensing worker are to be contacted if the case manager is unavailable and assistance is needed quickly. Foster parents should receive timely response to their inquiries and immediate response in the case of emergencies. The child protection administrator concluded the automated telephone system is not adequate for this purpose, as foster parents need to talk to a person.

DCYF's foster parent policy cites communication as crucial, and is the responsibility of all concerned with the care of the child. Foster parents are instructed by division policy to

3.3 Programmatic Support Of Foster Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 17: The DCYF Needs To Improve Responsiveness To Foster Family Parents' Calls (Continued)

expect regular contact from their CPSW or JPPO. Since foster parents are closest to the child on a day-to-day basis, their input is critical to ensuring the child's success. Furthermore, the division is aware that maintaining regular contact with foster parents and timely returning their calls supports foster parent retention. A 1998 federal ACF review of DCYF's practices concluded that communications between DCYF staff and foster parents needed improvement. The report recommended the division ensure telephone calls were returned in a timely manner through supervision.

According to the Adams-Mathews report of DCYF recruiting and retention practices required by the Eric L. Settlement Agreement, surveys of foster parents exiting State foster family service indicated the most common means to improve retention was to increase social worker contact by returning phone calls. This report also noted that foster child case managers were not generally seen as a source of support by foster parents.

The BQI, between August 1999 and June 2000, released reports of four district office reviews it conducted as required by the Eric L. Settlement Agreement. Overall, 63 percent of responding foster parents were satisfied that telephone calls were returned quickly, and 37 percent were dissatisfied.

Our mail survey of former DCYF foster parents (Appendix C) indicated that 52 percent of respondents agreed that case managers quickly returned telephone calls while 29 percent disagreed and 19 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. Forty-three percent agreed that someone other than their assigned case manager was available if the assigned case manager could not be reached; 32 percent disagreed, and 25 percent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Our mail survey of current DCYF foster parents (Appendix A) further indicated concern with responsiveness. Table 10 summarizes foster parent opinions on the availability of DCYF staff, Table 11 summarizes their opinions of the timeliness of DCYF response to calls, and Table 12 summarizes their opinions of the number of calls that must be made to obtain a response.

Table 10

Current DCYF Foster Parent Opinions On Availability Of Agency Staff			
	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree
Telephone Calls Were Returned Quickly	36%	28%	36%
Someone Other Than The Assigned Caseworker Was Available If Needed	61%	16%	24%

Source: LBA analysis of current DCYF foster parent mail survey responses (Appendix A).

3.3 Programmatic Support Of Foster Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 17: The DCYF Needs To Improve Responsiveness To Foster Family Parents' Calls (Continued)

Table 11

Current DCYF Foster Parent Opinions On Timeliness Of Agency Response					
Response Comes:					
Same Day	Next Day	Two Days	Three Or Four Days	Five, Six, Or Seven Days	More Than Seven Days
32%	37%	16%	5%	0%	11%

Source: LBA analysis of current DCYF foster parent mail survey responses (Appendix A).

Table 12

Current DCYF Foster Parent Opinions On Number Of Calls Needed To Obtain A Response					
One	Two	Three	Four	Five, Six, Or Seven	More Than Seven
21%	42%	24%	5%	0%	8%

Source: LBA analysis of current DCYF foster parent mail survey responses (Appendix A).

In the 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit report, we recommended that the division develop procedures to ensure district office staff respond to foster parent calls within 24 hours. The division concurred in part, responding that a "...better response to foster parents is desirable, but the division is not staffed adequately...[to provide] 24-hour response...." In 1999, the DCYF did not report progress towards improving its response times to foster parents, and continued to report staffing issues were an obstacle to adequately supporting foster parents. The child protection administrator indicated that there is also a lack of supervision and program assessment. Timeliness of response is not defined in division policy.

As noted in our 1993 observation, lack of foster parent support can lead to burnout, frustration, isolation, and departure from the foster care system by qualified and experienced foster parents. Our survey of former DCYF foster parents (Appendix C) indicated that for 35 percent of respondents, poor communication with CPSWs was a factor in their leaving fostering, and for 23 percent, poor communication with their JPPO was a factor. The same survey indicated that 29 percent of former foster parents had recommended others not become DCYF foster parents due to their experiences. Forty-three percent of former DCYF foster parents who responded to our survey indicated that better support/communication could have prevented them from leaving foster parenting.

Also, without adequate communication between foster parents and case managers, changes in a foster child's life may not be known across the team providing care, and untended problems may become unmanageable.

3.3 Programmatic Support Of Foster Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 17: The DCYF Needs To Improve Responsiveness To Foster Family Parents' Calls (Continued)

Recommendation:

We recommend the DCYF establish and uphold a statewide standard that sets a reasonable amount of time for foster parents to receive return telephone calls from DCYF staff. We further recommend that the DCYF streamline emergency contact protocols to ensure foster parent emergency calls during normal business hours are acted on immediately.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. To the extent that the observation is derived from the LBA survey of current DCYF foster parents we refer the reader to the DHHS response to observation No. 15 where we provided background information about the total number of current foster parents (750), the total surveyed (63) and the total number of replies on which the survey was based (40).

From the numbers presented in the observation, however, it appears that most foster family parents are satisfied with DCYF's responsiveness to their inquiries in that:

- *70% of former foster parents indicated that they were either neutral or agree with the proposition that their telephone calls were returned quickly by case managers.*
- *64% of current foster parents are neutral or agree with the proposition that their telephone calls were returned quickly.*
- *77% of current foster parents are neutral or agree with the proposition that someone other than their caseworker was available if needed.*
- *69% of current foster parents' telephone calls were returned the same or next day.*
- *85% of current foster parents' telephone calls were returned within two days.*

The Department would also note that the DCYF has issued cell phones to DCYF staff to help with the ability to be contacted and to return emergency calls to foster parents during normal business hours.

The use of a 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit report, to describe current foster parent reasons for leaving foster parenting, is misleading. The comments provided from the 1993 audit report do not reflect the Division's current experience with the reasons given by foster parents for leaving the program.

3.3 Programmatic Support Of Foster Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 17: The DCYF Needs To Improve Responsiveness To Foster Family Parents' Calls (Continued)

LBA Rejoinder:

We do not consider respondents who provided a neutral response as endorsing any position. The fact remains that 29 percent of former foster parents and over one-third of the current foster parent respondents consider the timeliness of response as problematic.

Our 1993 performance audit report of the Child Settlement Program is mentioned, in part, to demonstrate that timeliness of response to foster parent telephone calls is a longstanding issue. *Government Auditing Standards* require auditors to follow up on significant findings from previous audits.

The response does not address the recommendations made in the observation, leaving the State uninformed as to what the DCYF plans to do regarding a standard delineating a reasonable amount of time for DCYF field staff to return calls and how emergency calls will be expeditiously handled during normal business hours.

Observation No. 18

The DCYF Needs To Provide Adequate After Business Hours And Weekend Emergency Contact

The DCYF does not provide adequate mechanisms for foster family parents to contact State personnel after normal business hours and on weekends. We made the same observation in our 1993 Child Settlement

Program performance audit report and recommended that the division develop procedures to ensure that calls from foster parents were returned timely and make available field staff 24-hours per day. In 1993, the division's mechanism was reported to consist of contacting local police departments, who in turn would contact a supervisor. We recommended using on-call staff with pagers or a manned toll-free telephone number. Since that time, the division has contracted for the toll-free Helpline service that provides an information and referral service. Helpline staff reportedly have the ability to contact DCYF staff. For much of the audit period, no standardized procedure was in place and emergency contact procedures were left to individual social workers as a matter of policy. New procedures were implemented by the DCYF in December 1998, but changed little the options available to foster parents. According to the DCYF's *Foster Parent Handbook*, "...foster parents may have a number of different options...includ[ing]...local police, hospital or emergency services."

Members of the DCYF, including the director, the child protection administrator, and two foster care licensing workers concluded that current mechanisms for contacting the DCYF after business hours and on weekends are inadequate. Some field staff reported giving out their personal telephone numbers. DCYF staff and foster parents suggested the use of

3.3 Programmatic Support Of Foster Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 18: The DCYF Needs To Provide Adequate After Business Hours And Weekend Emergency Contact (Continued)

paggers and on-call staff to fill the existing emergency contact gap. Private agencies managing foster family placements reportedly have staff on-call 24-hours per day.

DCYF foster parent concerns indicated in responses to our mail surveys are summarized in Tables 13 and 14.

Table 13

Foster Care Related Help Is Readily Available After Hours			
	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree
Former DCYF Foster Parents	32%	29%	39%
Current DCYF Foster Parents	41%	27%	32%

Source: LBA analysis of current (Appendix A) and former (Appendix C) DCYF foster parent survey responses.

Table 14

Foster Care Related Help Is Readily Available On Weekends			
	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree
Former DCYF Foster Parents	32%	32%	36%
Current DCYF Foster Parents	32%	36%	32%

Source: LBA analysis of current (Appendix A) and former (Appendix C) DCYF foster parent survey responses.

As in 1993, the DCYF reported staffing levels do not permit 24-hour response to foster parents. Timeliness of response is not defined in division policy.

Without adequate emergency and after-hours contact mechanisms, foster parents may feel burned out, frustrated, and otherwise unsupported, leading to the loss of qualified foster parents. The loss of foster parents places greater burden on the State's recruiting efforts. Furthermore, the needs of foster children may not be adequately met.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DCYF:

- **Establish and uphold a statewide standard that delineates a reasonable amount of time in which foster parents can expect to have an after-hours telephone call returned and ensure field staff respond accordingly.**
- **Establish a mechanism that provides foster family care parents 24-hour emergency contact with a district office staff representative seven days a week.**

3.3 Programmatic Support Of Foster Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 18: The DCYF Needs To Provide Adequate After Business Hours And Weekend Emergency Contact (Continued)

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. The Division has, and has had, an after hours information and referral system with a toll free telephone number in place since 1986. That system, in addition to providing information and referral, has the capacity to access supervisory staff at DCYF, 24 hours a day, to assist in an emergency.

In 1998 the Division adopted as policy its Foster Parent Handbook. That handbook contains emergency protocols for foster parents and includes a hierarchical list of DCYF staff and others to call in the event of an emergency. The handbook clearly references the Division's after hours information and referral system.

DHHS does not concur with the observation's criticism of the handbook's suggestion that foster parents contact police, hospital or emergency services in certain emergency situations. Clearly, whom a foster parent should call in an emergency, depends on the nature of the emergency.

The DCYF Director has proposed additional articles to the collective bargaining agreement to pay employees to be on call. Specifically the proposed articles read as follows:

When a supervisor is designated as the Administrator on Call for the weekend, he/she will receive an additional \$350. The supervisor does not waive his/her right to portal to portal pay in the event he/she must return to the office. On call status shall be rotated amongst the supervisors.

Whenever any Child Protective Service Worker (CPSW) or Juvenile Probation Parole Officer (JPPO) is placed on call for a designated period of time, he/she will receive one (1) hour of pay for every five (5) hours of on call status. On-call status shall be rotated amongst the employees. The employee does not waive his/her right to the minimum time allowed or the portal to portal pay.

For the second article the DCYF Director proposed having one or two CPSWs or JPPOs per region of the state to provide guidance. The estimated costs to the state for the proposed additional articles was \$18,200 for supervisors, and \$173,222.40 for CPSW/JPPOs. Neither of the proposals made it into the contract.

To the extent that the observation is derived from the LBA mail survey of current and former DCYF foster parents, we refer the reader to the DHHS response to Observation No. 15 where we provided background information on the total number of current and former foster parents, the number to whom surveys were sent and the number of replies upon which the observation was based. At face value, however, the observation's tables indicate that:

3.3 Programmatic Support Of Foster Parents (Continued)

Observation No. 18: The DCYF Needs To Provide Adequate After Business Hours And Weekend Emergency Contact (Continued)

- *61% of former and 67% of current foster parents surveyed were either neutral or agree with the proposition that foster care related help is readily available after hours.*
- *64% of former and 67% of current foster parents are either neutral or agree with the proposition that foster care related help is readily available on weekends.*

While the Department acknowledges that the existing system is not ideal, it does, however, provide foster parents with the ability to contact the Division after hours and on weekends in emergencies and it does so within the confines of existing resources.

LBA Rejoinder:

We do not consider respondents who provided a neutral response as endorsing any position. The facts remain that:

- **39 percent of former and 32 percent of current foster parents consider after hours foster care related help to be problematic, and**
- **36 percent of former and 32 percent of current foster parents consider weekend foster care related help to be problematic.**

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES
FOSTER FAMILY CARE**

DCYF MANAGEMENT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

DCYF management is responsible for overseeing the foster family care system and its operations. Among management's responsibilities are: promulgating required administrative rules; measuring, evaluating, and monitoring program performance and services including operations and finances; overseeing therapeutic level foster care; and ensuring appropriate controls over the foster care system including operations and resources.

4.1 Statutory Compliance

Management is responsible for ensuring administrative rules are adopted and reflective of current State statutes in areas of operation, and as required by RSA 541-A. Administrative rules govern an agency's interactions with the public, defining not only the standards for its own activities, but also expectations regarding actions and standards of performance for the public and other entities. The rule making process allows for public and legislative oversight of an agency's operations. Our 1993 performance audit reported numerous areas in which administrative rule improvements were needed, including those governing foster care licensing, rate setting, and child placing agencies.

Our analysis of the status of foster family care related rules and regulations throughout the audit period has not removed this concern. We found that staff were aware of longstanding rule deficiencies, and that the DCYF legal counsel reported to the director the need to adopt rules. The DCYF's commitment and coordination of resources devoted to rule promulgation is insufficient.

Specific areas that require improvement consist of some repeated issues and one issue which is unresolved since our 1993 performance audit's FY 1987 – FY 1992 review period: 1) inconsistently maintained certification for payment standards for residential facilities; 2) expired rules determining reimbursement rates for facilities providing certified care and services to children; 3) lack of child placing agency rules; and 4) various statutory requirements not incorporated into rule, including the requirement that each licensed child care agency file for relicensing three months before their respective license expires.

Observation No. 19

***Improvement Needed In
Promulgation Of Rules Related To
Foster Family Care***

maintained during the audit period.

The DHHS is statutorily required to have a number of administrative rules in areas related to foster family care. We found that in some notable cases administrative rules were either nonexistent, expired, or inconsistently

4.1 Statutory Compliance (Continued)

Observation No. 19: Improvement Needed In Promulgation Of Rules Related To Foster Family Care (Continued)

RSA 170-E requires the DHHS to develop rules governing the licensure of child placing agencies in the State. Administrative rule He-C 6448 governing child placing agencies expired May 1990 and the department has been without rules in the area since that time. Subsequently, the expired rules were adopted by the division as policy directive PD 92-04, effective January 1992. According to the child protection administrator, the DCYF has licensed and relicensed child placing agencies since 1993; however, other providers were not licensed as child placing agencies in part because DHHS rules have been expired. We previously reported the lack of child placing agency administrative rules in the 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit.

RSA 170-G:4, XVII, requires that the DHHS set rates for any service provided through social workers for referred children. RSA 170-G:4, XVII-a, requires annual review of these rates. In March 1994, DHHS rules determining reimbursement rates for facilities providing certified care and services to children expired, and have not been readopted since.

RSA 170-G:4, XVIII, requires the DHHS to certify all providers of services, placements and programs which are paid for by the department. According to Chapter 402:27, Laws of 1987 effective July 25, 1987, the State must have clear standards and procedures to assure quality and to assess the need for these services, placements, and programs. For 39 months of the audit period, the DHHS lacked administrative rules certifying State-paid providers of residential facility services. These facilities include foster family care homes, therapeutic level foster care, and other homes and services. Administrative rule He-C 6350, Certification for Payment Standards for Residential Facilities, became effective on July 1, 1988 and, except for minor sections amended later, expired on July 1, 1994. Subsequently, the division did not readopt the rules until October 25, 1997.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the DHHS:

- **promulgate rules to govern child placing agencies in accordance with RSA 170-E and RSA 541-A;**
- **promulgate rules to establish an adequate rate of reimbursement for facilities providing certified child care and services, including any service provided through social workers for referred children, and the DCYF annually review these rates as required by State law; and**
- **maintain certification for payment rules to meet statutory requirements.**

4.1 Statutory Compliance (Continued)

Observation No. 19: Improvement Needed In Promulgation Of Rules Related To Foster Family Care (Continued)

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. This observation discusses DHHS rulemaking in three areas: licensure of child placing agencies, rate setting and certification of providers for payment. This response will address each rulemaking topic separately.

DHHS concurs that administrative rules related to the licensing of child placing agencies have expired. At present a workgroup within the DCYF is in the process of developing a draft of licensing rules for child placing agencies.

DHHS does not concur that the absence of rules has limited the number of child placing agencies in the state. During the period covered by the audit, child placing agencies have been relicensed based on services deemed needed by the State and according to standards historically applied. Up until the summer of 2000, DCYF sent application materials in response to inquiries from potential applicants. During the period that application materials were being sent out, only three agencies submitted completed applications. All three were advised that “until revisions [to the child placing agency rules] are completed and the rules accepted by Legislative Services, any and all applications will be held in abeyance.”

We believe that the portion of the observation that deals with rate setting is outside the scope of the audit. The expired rules that are the focus of this observation, He-C 6422 (New Hampshire Child Care Providers Rate-Setting Regulations) are inapplicable to the establishment of rates for foster family care. He-C 6422 sets forth the establishment of rules for residential facilities such as group homes and treatment facilities. To the extent that the focus of this observation is a set of rules with no applicability to foster family care, it is outside the scope of the audit.

With regard to the portion of the observation concerning certification for payment, we note that He-C 6350 (Certification for Payment Standards for Residential Facilities) has been in place since 10/24/97 and that from the period from July 1, 1988 to the present (a period of 149 months) DHHS has been without rules related to payment certification for 39 months.

To the extent that the observation or the introductory material that precedes it suggest that rules are “statutorily required by RSA 170-G:4, XVIII to enable DHHS to act pursuant to RSA 170-G:4, XVIII or any other provision, DHHS does not concur. The authority of DHHS to certify providers is clearly stated: RSA 170-G:4, XVIII gives DHHS the “power and duty” to “[C]ertify all providers of services, placements, and programs which are paid by the department pursuant to RSA 169-B:40, 169-C:27 and 169-D:29...” In addition, RSA 170-G:4, XVIII, establishes the standard to be utilized in the exercise of the department’s authority to certify a provider. The reference in the first paragraph of the observation to Chapter 402:27 of the Laws of 1987 appears to be drafted to imply that the referenced statement (“...the state must have clear standards and procedures to assure quality and to assess the need for these services, placements and programs”), establishes a substantive

4.1 Statutory Compliance (Continued)

Observation No. 19: Improvement Needed In Promulgation Of Rules Related To Foster Family Care (Continued)

requirement to adopt rules. It does not; the above quoted section of Chapter 402 is a portion of a statement of purpose for a series of provisions related to a number of statutory provisions related to certification and payment, including amendments to RSA 169-B:40, 169-C:27 and 169-D:29 and the enactment of RSA 169-F. In re Ryan G. 142 NH 643 (1998), a case in which the central issue was the department's authority to certify a provider and in which the facts giving rise to the action occurred during the period when certification rules were not in place, the court affirmed the department's decision to deny certification based upon DHHS's "proper consideration of factors relating to its statutory mandate."

LBA Rejoinder:

The focus of the observation is foster family care related rule promulgation during the eight year audit period FY 1993 – FY 2000.

We noted the agency replaced administrative rule He-C 6448 (Standards for Child Placing Agencies) with an internal policy directive PD 92-04 (Standards for Child-Placing Agencies). The agency's subsequent use of the policy to relicense existing child placing agencies while holding new provider applications in abeyance pending acceptance of rules, is tantamount to using the same set of conditions to justify taking opposing actions. We also note that during the periods of the audit when foster care licensing rules were expired, the DCYF continued to both license new foster care applicants and relicense existing foster parents.

We question the DHHS comment that the absence of child placing agency rules did not limit the number of child placing agencies. According to DCYF correspondence, none of the three agencies that applied to become child placing agencies were told that there was no need for their respective services; however, they were told that the DCYF was not processing applications due to expired rules.

We submit that duly adopted, He-C 6422 could regulate foster care-related service rate setting:

- State law requires the DHHS to set rates for all services, placements, and programs which are paid for by the department.
- General, specialized, emergency, crisis, and therapeutic level foster care are services and placements paid for by the department.
- He-C 6422 is the set of administrative rules the department provided to the LBA that details rate setting.
- Foster family homes are required to be certified for payment under residential provider standards.

4.1 Statutory Compliance (Continued)

Observation No. 19: Improvement Needed In Promulgation Of Rules Related To Foster Family Care (Continued)

- The rate setter reported that the expired He-C 6422 is currently used to set rates.

We note that *Government Auditing Standards* require auditors to examine and report on instances of significant noncompliance uncovered during audit procedures.

Observation No. 20

Statutory Requirements Need To Be Incorporated Into DHHS Rules Governing Foster Family Care

DHHS licensing standards for foster family home providers should be more comprehensive. Throughout the audit period, the DCYF applied administrative rule He-C 6446 to permit, license, and relicense foster family homes. Private child placing agencies also relied on the rules to permit, license, and relicense their foster family homes. DCYF policy states that the State's licensing standards ensure the safety and security of children in placement. Administrative rule He-C 6446 is an integral part of certification as licensure is a prerequisite to required certification for payment.

However, He-C 6446 does not incorporate several statutorily required rules, as well as other statutory requirements binding upon licensed foster family homes. Nor are they included in DCYF policies and procedures. By not including these elements, He-C 6446 does not adequately inform foster family care providers of their responsibilities. Areas where He-C 6446 should be made more comprehensive include:

- Requirements for annual monitoring visits and keeping clear and comprehensive records on such visits contained in RSA 170-E:31, IV.
- The requirement contained in RSA-170-E:32, I, that each licensed child care agency "...file for renewal of its license 3 months prior to the expiration date of the license on forms prescribed by rules adopted by the commissioner under RSA 541-A."
- Rules governing the confidentiality of information collected pursuant to foster home and child placing agency licensing required by RSA 170-E:34, I (c) and rules governing the investigation of applicants to determine the potential threat a person convicted of certain crimes may pose to children required by RSA 170-E:29, IV.
- Emergency placement of children in unlicensed foster family homes. RSA 170-E:45, I, stipulates that anyone who conducts, operates, or acts as a foster home without a license or permit shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. According to RSA 170-E:45, II, unlicensed foster family homes that are asked to receive children by the DCYF or other child placing agencies on an emergency basis are exempt from this penalty for 30 days. According to the DCYF, provisional interim care (PIC) agreements placing children in homes that were not licensed as foster family homes were made under this statutory exception. However, PIC agreements are not defined by State law.

4.1 Statutory Compliance (Continued)

Observation No. 20: Statutory Requirements Need To Be Incorporated Into DHHS Rules Governing Foster Family Care (Continued)

Recommendation:

We recommend the DHHS amend He-C 6446 to reflect departmental practice and to comply with statutory requirements for administrative rules. We also recommend the DHHS include in rule other statutory requirements binding upon foster family homes to ensure providers are aware of their responsibilities.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DCYF concurs that the version of He-C 6446 in effect until July, 2000 when DCYF adopted a substantially amended He-C 6446, did not adequately describe the responsibilities of foster parents in all areas. However, given that He-C 6446 describes in exhaustive detail the procedures to be followed to apply for a foster family home permit or license and the responsibilities of foster parents and DHHS, DHHS does not concur that at present “DHHS licensing standards need to be more comprehensive or include certain “statutorily required rules” and “statutory requirements binding upon licensed foster family homes.” DHHS also does not concur that as presently adopted He-C 6446 does not adequately inform foster family care providers of their responsibilities.

*He-C 6446 as presently adopted, does not include certain statutory requirements binding upon the department because the agency, as well as all other participants in the foster family care system, are subject to the statutory requirements. Regardless of whether an administrative rule incorporates a statutory provision, the statute provides clear notice of the responsibility and operates to regulate the conduct. Clearly established case law holds that “promulgation of a rule pursuant to RSA 541-A is not necessary to carry out what a statute authorizes on its face.” *Smith v. N.H. Board of Psychologists*, 138 N.H. 548, 553 (1994) (citing *Stuart v. State*, 134 N.H. 702, 705 (1991)). DHHS and foster family home providers are adequately informed of their responsibilities by 170-E and He-C 6446.*

In response to the specific examples of the purported deficiencies of He-C 6446 set forth in this observation, DHHS states that:

- The requirement that applicants for license renewal file three (3) months prior to the expiration of the license is set forth in He-C 6446.15(a), as presently in effect.*
- The statutory requirements for annual monitoring visits and that certain information be kept confidential are requirements that regulate the behavior of the department, not of foster parents.*
- RSA 170-E: 45, II grants authority to DHHS to place a child in an unlicensed home on an emergency basis for a period of up to 30 days. Given that such provisional interim care homes are not subject to the permit or licensing process, and that department policy*

4.1 Statutory Compliance (Continued)

Observation No. 20: Statutory Requirements Need To Be Incorporated Into DHHS Rules Governing Foster Family Care (Continued)

governing such placement has been in place during the audit period, it is not surprising that He-C 6446 does not contain a reference to such placements.

LBA Rejoinder:

The focus of this observation and recommendation is that during the eight-year audit period of FY 1993 - FY 2000, foster care licensing rule He-C 6446 lacked information that could be useful to foster family care providers. If the information was contained in He-C 6446, the rule could serve as a single source document for foster parents and child placing agencies to find everything they need to know about requirements for licensing and re-licensing.

The new He-C 6446 does indeed contain one of the omissions we note in the observation, however, the fact remains that they were not included during the audit period.

We question whether the DHHS is correct in stating that the requirement for annual monitoring visits to foster family homes regulates only the behavior of the department. We offer that because the DHHS would have to enter the homes of foster parents, DHHS actions would affect foster parents. However, the DHHS has no rules governing how it would operationalize its actions.

We question whether the DHHS is accurate in stating that the requirement for keeping certain information confidential regulates only the behavior of the department. We offer that citizens whose information must be kept confidential may be affected by DHHS actions. However, the DHHS has no rules governing how it would operationalize its actions. In addition, we wonder what the department's objection would be to informing foster family care providers that information collected pursuant to licensing be confidential. Also we note that under RSA 170-E:34, I, (c), the commissioner is specifically required to adopt rules in this area. He-C 6446 is also used by private child placing agencies and as such provides guidelines for each agency's licensing activities.

RSA 170-E:45, II authorizes "Foster family homes which have not been licensed but which have been asked to receive children by the department or another child-placing agency..." to receive children for no more than 30 days. Provisional Interim Care (PIC) agreements were used by the DCYF to operationalize emergency placements allowed under this statute. However, absent an administrative rule defining the department's requirements and expectations of these care providers, we question how the department could enforce these requirements and expectations. Moreover, the statute also permits other, private child placing agencies to place children on an emergency basis. We question how

4.1 Statutory Compliance (Continued)

Observation No. 20: Statutory Requirements Need To Be Incorporated Into DHHS Rules Governing Foster Family Care (Continued)

private child placing agency operationalization of this would be consistent without DHHS rules.

4.2 Information Management

Management is responsible for measuring, evaluating, and monitoring program performance and services. According to the federal General Accounting Office, program managers need both operational and financial data to determine whether they are meeting: 1) their agencies' strategic and annual performance plans, and 2) their accountability goals. Managers also need data to determine compliance with statutes and rules. Appropriately designed and utilized information systems help to efficiently, effectively, and economically collect, analyze, and store valid and reliable program data that help management determine if programs are functioning as designed. Information systems should be designed to be user friendly, with reporting capabilities matched to management's financial and program needs, including oversight. Information is also needed throughout an agency to achieve objectives, and systems should be designed to realize those aims.

As we noted during our 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit, one way that the DCYF managed information was through the Children's Information System (CIS), a bill payment system for child settlement services that include foster family care. The DCYF transitioned to the BRIDGES information system in 1997. BRIDGES, according to the DCYF, is based on the State of Oklahoma's KIDS system, and is a child welfare system that meets federal standards for Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS), Adoption/Foster Care Automated Reporting Systems (AFCARS), and National Child Abuse and Neglect Data Systems. BRIDGES is intended to be an automated, comprehensive child welfare case management system providing the tools to support improved case decision making and planning, better overall tracking of cases, less paperwork for caseworkers, and to integrate services across the DHHS systems including the department's New Heights Eligibility Management System. BRIDGES is used to process child abuse and neglect and CHINS referrals, process claims, make provider payments, and manage program information. The CIS claims processing component, including financial functionality, was migrated to BRIDGES, as were CIS data. BRIDGES has reportedly improved timely processing of provider claims when compared to the CIS legacy system.

DCYF management reported that they had to compress a three-year BRIDGES implementation timetable into one year, resulting in an underdeveloped case management utility because the claims management piece took precedence. A former financial administrator reported that BRIDGES was a major conversion and that issues should be expected to arise, noting that DCYF program costs are not adequately captured and expressing frustration with BRIDGES financial and programmatic reporting.

4.2 Information Management (Continued)

During our audit we found numerous issues with the DCYF's BRIDGES system, including:

- unreliable data;
- claims information not reconcilable with the New Hampshire Integrated Financial System;
- case management utility underdeveloped;
- system not meeting Eric L. reporting requirements;
- system not producing ad hoc reports;
- system not user friendly;
- system frequently unavailable for use; and
- detailed program financial information unavailable.

The DCYF could not provide for us the cost to date of the BRIDGES system, or foster family care administrative and program costs. The division's management information system is inadequate for foster care fiscal and case management needs, which diminishes the DCYF's ability to monitor the foster care system and promote efficient, effective, and economical program management.

Observation No. 21

The DCYF Should Report The Administrative And Program Costs Of The Foster Family Care System

The DCYF can not report the complete cost of foster family care for the audit period. Even though foster family care accounts for 30 percent of the DCYF's caseload, when requested by us, the division could not provide:

- Administrative costs for most of the audit period. Our analysis of DCYF fiscal year 2000 financial data indicated that foster family care administration was 35 percent of what the DCYF reported as the program's fiscal year 2000 total expenditures. According to DCYF financial staff, prior fiscal year estimates were not obtainable due to the division's cost allocation system.
- The costs for training DCYF foster care-related staff, and foster parents and prospective foster parents for the audit period.
- The cost, to date, of BRIDGES. BRIDGES was designed to support effective fiscal and programmatic management of the DCYF's programs. As we note in Observation No. 22, BRIDGES does not meet the needs of foster family care system management.
- Specialized foster family care costs before fiscal year 1999.
- Sufficient detail to determine costs of individualized placements made during the audit period as we discuss in Observation No. 26.

Without focus on programmatic expenditures, the division was not able to determine how much the foster care program cost. Neither could the DCYF determine whether those expenditures were reasonable nor could it conclude whether the program was effective and efficient.

4.2 Information Management (Continued)

Observation No. 21: The DCYF Should Report The Administrative And Program Costs Of The Foster Family Care System (Continued)

Recommendation:

We recommend the DCYF ensure management and their information systems are able to accurately and fully track essential data, to include financial data and administrative costs, and produce needed reports to allow and document adequate program oversight.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DHHS concurs that because of the limitations of certain financial reporting systems within the department, it was not able to provide the following financial information during the audit period:

- Administrative costs - Prior to 2000, the department's cost allocation system spread the administrative costs for foster family care across various other programs. As a result, the Division was not able to isolate the administrative costs of foster family care from the administrative costs of these other programs. As indicated by the observation, however, the department's current cost allocation system is able to capture these administrative costs.*
- Training - Prior to 1995, foster parent training was conducted at the district offices by DCYF staff and there was no separate itemization for the costs of that training. Since 1995, however, the Division has contracted with the College for Lifelong Learning to provide both preservice and inservice training for foster parents. DCYF has provided the annual costs of that training to the auditors.*
- Costs of specialized foster care - Prior to 1999, specialized foster family costs were included in general foster care figures and could not be factored out.*

DHHS does not concur that the department cannot report on the costs of individualized placements. Individualized placement costs were provided to the auditor. Without more information from the auditor, however, the Division cannot respond to the observation's criticism that the reported data "lacked sufficient detail."

DHHS believes that the total cost of the Bridges automated cost management system is beyond the scope of the audit.

4.2 Information Management (Continued)

Observation No. 21: The DCYF Should Report The Administrative And Program Costs Of The Foster Family Care System (Continued)

LBA Rejoinder:

We received cost data from the CLL but the data do not reconcile with the DCYF's June 2001 data we received during exit conferences.

We requested cost data for IPs during the audit period on two separate occasions. The two data reports that we received from the DCYF did not agree with one another; neither did the costs agree with the DCYF's summary report of expenditures, differing by \$1.3 million. We were informed by the financial administrator that the cost differences could not be reconciled without a time intensive case-by-case review.

Government Auditing Standards include requirements that we report on the management control environment of the auditee. We reported the DCYF can not report the complete costs of BRIDGES, the division's automated financial and case management system. Additionally, the DCYF reports that it intends to spend over \$10.3 million on BRIDGES upgrades through 2004.

Observation No. 22

BRIDGES Needs To Adequately Support Foster Care Fiscal And Case Management Needs

The BRIDGES system does not adequately support fiscal and program management of the foster care system. Title IV-E of the Social Security Act requires standardized data. Also, federal rules require that each state have a

SACWIS and submit AFCARS data semiannually. RSA 170-G:4, XIX, requires the DHHS to implement and administer an automated case management system in compliance with federal and State requirements that meets the needs of the State's children and youth.

The BRIDGES system was designed to support DCYF program administration, including financial and case management. However, the child protection administrator, the foster care specialist, the Eric L. monitor, the Eric L. Oversight Panel, the DCYF information specialist, and other DCYF personnel stated BRIDGES data are unreliable, inaccurate, and incomplete. Reports from the Eric L. Oversight Panel, the Eric L. monitor, a 1998 federal ACF SACWIS review of BRIDGES, as well as DCYF personnel, including the child protection administrator, the information specialist, and the foster care specialist all concluded BRIDGES is unable to provide needed reporting data, limiting program management. BRIDGES can not reliably produce foster family care program information, including both the current census of foster family children in placement, and the number of foster family children in unlicensed homes. BRIDGES also lacks historical foster care placement cost data. Moreover, due to BRIDGES related inadequacies, the DCYF twice did not submit federally required AFCARS data, which resulted in total federal fines of \$53,274. The Eric L. Oversight Panel and the monitor cited insufficient BRIDGES data as

4.2 Information Management (Continued)

Observation No. 22: BRIDGES Needs To Adequately Support Foster Care Fiscal And Case Management Needs (Continued)

an obstacle to achieving Eric L. compliance, placing the State at risk of renewed legal action.

CPSWs and JPPOs reported they do not have enough time to enter required BRIDGES data. Table 15 summarizes the hours CPSWs and JPPOs who responded to our survey (Appendix E) reported they need to enter all the required data into BRIDGES; Table 16 summarizes the hours reportedly spent on data entry.

Table 15

Hours Per Work Week Reportedly Needed To Enter Required Data Into BRIDGES					
Less Than Two Hours	Two To Five Hours	Six To 10 Hours	11 To 20 Hours	21 To 30 Hours	Over 30 Hours
4%	35%	27%	23%	7%	4%

Source: LBA analysis of DCYF field staff survey data (Appendix E).

Table 16

Hours Per Work Week Reportedly Spent To Enter Required Data Into BRIDGES					
Less Than Two Hours	Two to Five Hours	Six to 10 Hours	11 To 20 Hours	21 To 30 Hours	Over 30 Hours
22%	59%	19%	0%	0%	0%

Source: LBA analysis of DCYF field staff survey data (Appendix E).

Ninety-six percent of respondents stated they did not enter all required foster family care information into BRIDGES because casework came first. Additionally, numerous information sources including the DCYF's BQI, the Eric L. monitor, the information specialist, and other DCYF personnel reported case management data are inconsistently entered into BRIDGES because DCYF case workers lacked the required time to use BRIDGES. We note that DCYF staff and a 1998 federal ACF SACWIS review of BRIDGES recommended an increased role for support staff to assist with data entry in an effort to make BRIDGES data more complete.

BRIDGES was not designed with foster care as a focus. Data transferred from the CIS to BRIDGES had errors and were incomplete. The DCYF used paper records to extract CIS data from earlier years but some data were lost and had to be manually recreated. In addition, design limitations hindered BRIDGES from fully functioning as a case management system. The child protection administrator, the foster care specialist, the information specialist, the Eric L. monitor, other DCYF personnel, and the 1998 federal ACF SACWIS review of BRIDGES reported redundant information systems are used in parallel with BRIDGES, straining resources. The BQI, the information specialist, and various DCYF personnel stated BRIDGES added to caseworker workloads. The DCYF has concluded it is already understaffed.

4.2 Information Management (Continued)

Observation No. 22: BRIDGES Needs To Adequately Support Foster Care Fiscal And Case Management Needs (Continued)

A DCYF financial administrator, the child protection administrator, and other DCYF personnel stated that BRIDGES could not isolate costs for foster family care. Specific information we requested, such as date of entry into the placement, date of exit, cost, and other data, on individualized placements and individual service options were only obtained after DCYF staff reportedly conducted a time-consuming, non-BRIDGES analysis.

DCYF staff resistance to an automated system contributed to inconsistent BRIDGES data entry. The system required new skills of the users. The child protection administrator, other DCYF staff, and BQI information reported insufficient staff training and support impairs BRIDGES accuracy. The foster care specialist and other DCYF personnel stated that technical problems contribute to BRIDGES' inaccuracy. The system was frequently down and system components were not complete. There were system design defects, such as duplicate entry requirements. In addition, an accelerated, one-year BRIDGES implementation time schedule was accepted to ensure enhanced federal funding. The information specialist, other DCYF staff, and the federal review of BRIDGES concluded the system could not be adequately implemented in one year.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DCYF ensure implementation and administration of an automated case management system that complies with federal and State requirements and meets the needs of the State's children and youth.

Recommendations towards achieving compliance include:

- **commission an independent, detailed evaluation of the BRIDGES system;**
- **apply sufficient resources to ensure financial and program management data are reliable;**
- **emphasize management and supervision to ensure standards are met; and**
- **consider an increased role in data entry for support staff.**

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DHHS acknowledges that the Bridges automated case management system requires further improvements to address concerns about usability and report generation. DHHS believes that the combination of the enhancements and refinements that have been accomplished since Bridges was implemented and the changes that will be made pursuant to a contract with Dynamics Resource Corporation (DRC) which begins on July 1, 2001 will improve the usability of the system and its capacity to provide case management and fiscal information. However, DHHS does not concur that the LBA's examination of the Bridges system that forms the basis of the observation is adequate.

4.2 Information Management (Continued)

Observation No. 22: BRIDGES Needs To Adequately Support Foster Care Fiscal And Case Management Needs (Continued)

DHHS' principle objection to the observation is its failure to acknowledge the on-going development of Bridges during the audit period. At no point in the observation does the LBA either summarize the development history of the system, or specify the point in time when it examined the capabilities of the system. To correct this deficiency, we provide the following information about the development and implementation of Bridges.

- *When the availability of federal funding on a 75%/25% matching basis was assured for the development of a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), DHHS created a development team in the summer of 1995.*
- *An RFP for the development of the SACWIS system was issued in early 1996.*
- *The contract with DRC for the development of the SACWIS system was approved by Governor and Council in June 1996.*
- *During 1996 and 1997 DHHS began to introduce computers to the operations of the department on a large scale. Prior to that time, state office and district office staff had little access to computer technology.*
- *The implementation of the initial stages of the case management portion of Bridges began in March 1997 with the piloting of Bridges in a single district office. Beginning in April 1997 Bridges was introduced to one district office per week until the district office rollout was completed in June 1997.*
- *Part of the planned implementation of Bridges was to maintain the pre-existing Children's Information System (CIS) for billing and fiscal information until December 1997 to reduce the burden on field staff and to insure continued uninterrupted support for providers.*
- *The federal review of the Bridges system that is the basis of the 1998 federal SACWIS report was conducted in August 1997, less than three months after the completion of the district office rollout of the case management portion of Bridges and four months before the integration of CIS into Bridges.*
- *The letter of April 27, 1998 from the Office of State Systems within the Federal Administration for Children and Families that accompanied and summarized the 1998 federal SACWIS report includes the following statements, which clearly indicate both the preliminary nature of the assessment and the overall level of confidence in the Bridges system:*

This review was initiated at our request based on our understanding of the progress that had been made by the State to implement the system. In hindsight, we must acknowledge that our review was probably conducted

4.2 Information Management (Continued)

Observation No. 22: BRIDGES Needs To Adequately Support Foster Care Fiscal And Case Management Needs (Continued)

prematurely. While the State has undertaken extraordinary efforts to implement the system statewide, there were a number of components that were incomplete at the time of our review. This assessment should not be viewed as a concern on our part about the underlying design of the system or the ability of the State to complete a fully functional SACWIS; rather it is an acknowledgement that at the time of our review the system was not finished....

The review team found that Bridges appears to be well-designed and an effective foundation for a child welfare system that will support the needs of the state and end-user community.

We note that DHHS contracted with Maximus to undertake an evaluation of Bridges and to prepare a comprehensive response to the 1998 federal SACWIS report in preparation for a final review by the Administration for Children and Families of Bridges compliance with the SACWIS requirements. Based on the Maximus report, which was submitted to ACF in May 2001, and the anticipated ACF final assessment, DHHS expects that the system will be found fully compliant with federal SACWIS requirements by fall of 2002.

Our second concern with the observation is that the LBA apparently undertook no independent review of what information and reports Bridges has been and is now producing. From our understanding of the LBA's methodology, it did not seek or obtain copies of the available Bridges reports or examine enhancements to the case management and fiscal reporting structures. Instead, the LBA appeared to rely on what various program staff members said Bridges did or could do. Without an independent review of Bridges' report capacity, the LBA is without the sufficient basis to determine whether the information system is at fault or whether, by reason of inexperience, lack of training, inadequate support or other problems, staff has been unable to use Bridges effectively. To base an analysis of a newly developed and complex information system on the statements of staff without an independent examination of the validity of such statements is not adequate.

We do not concur with the inclusion of sweeping conclusory statements without either attributing such statements to an authoritative source or identifying the information, data or other documentation that supports the statements. Examples of such statements and the specific department response follow:

- *“Bridges can not reliably produce foster family care program information including both the current census of foster family children in placement and the number of foster family children in unlicensed homes. Bridges also lacks historical foster care placement cost data.” (Paragraph 2) In fact, data on the current census of foster family children in placement is included in the “Children Out of Their Own Home” report. Also, Bridges contains all foster care data for all children on CIS at the time of conversion, including cost data. Earlier records are stored on tape and are accessible if needed.*

4.2 Information Management (Continued)

Observation No. 22: BRIDGES Needs To Adequately Support Foster Care Fiscal And Case Management Needs (Continued)

- *“Bridges was not designed with foster care as a focus... Data transferred from the Children’s Information System (CIS) to Bridges had errors and were incomplete.” (Paragraph 5) In fact, Resource Management (Foster Care) is one of the eight major functional subsystems of Bridges. In addition, foster care data converted from CIS to Bridges provide an accurate and complete record of placement data for all active children.*
- *“The system was frequently down and system components were not complete.” In fact, Bridges has an excellent performance record. Individual PCs may fail but Bridges is not “frequently down”. DHHS is embarking on a PC upgrade to address certain PC problems.*

Finally, we note that several staff whose statements are referenced in the observation take significant issue with the accuracy of the comments attributed to them.

LBA Rejoinder:

The focus of the observation is the BRIDGES support of foster care fiscal and case management needs throughout the eight year audit period of FY 1993 – FY 2000. We note that the DHHS response mentions unaudited reports outside the audit period, including a report DHHS stated it submitted to the federal ACF in May 2001; the audit period ended June 30, 2000.

The observation reports information derived from: structured interviews with knowledgeable agency personnel during 1999 and 2000; field staff survey data collected in 2000; BQI reports from 1999 and 2000; Eric L. monitor reports from 1998, 1999, and 2000; direct observation in 2000 and 2001; and other material from 1998, 1999, and 2000. Although the DHHS questions the LBA’s mention of the 1998 ACF report, the above mentioned sources indicated that conditions that were initially reported in the 1998 ACF report still remained.

Several DHHS staff reported that data were lost during the CIS to BRIDGES conversion. This included the comptroller of the department who, in transmitting data from the DCYF financial administrator, reported to the LBA budget division, “Please note that the data before Bridges came on board in 1999 may not be completely accurate, but it is the best information that we have. That is to say, when we converted data from CIS to Bridges, not all of the data on clients served and dollars spent transferred. That is why especially in SFY 1997 we have some cases where clients are listed and there are not dollars spent and visa versa, for some of the service types.” DCYF staff similarly reported that CIS data did not completely transfer to BRIDGES.

4.2 Information Management (Continued)

Observation No. 23

The DCYF Should Adequately Manage Foster Family Care Program Information

The DCYF has no comprehensive policy on gathering, reporting, retaining, and assuring the quality of information needed to effectively and efficiently manage the foster care system.

The division utilizes an unintegrated array of automated and manual methods to collect and store information, including New Hampshire BRIDGES, commercial off-the-shelf automated data management tools, and paper files.

An improved mechanism for managing DCYF information is needed for obtaining and storing reliable and timely data to support program accountability and to measure management effectiveness, overall program effectiveness and efficiency, as well as compliance with external requirements. Relevant, timely, and accurate operational and financial information will help the DCYF to control its operations and measure how well it achieves its objectives. Accurate and timely data will also help with planning for future activities.

DCYF management, while reporting that staff resources are strained, relies on time consuming, manually gathered statistics and utilizes redundant workaround methods to collect data that function in parallel to BRIDGES. These parallel methods further strain staff resources. Also, the foster care specialist and a DCYF BQI report, state that there were differences in DCYF's manual and automated data reporting on the same facet of agency operation.

A State records manager and the DCYF foster care specialist reported guidelines for retaining foster care files were unclear. During the audit period, the DCYF had no policy and procedure governing the creation and maintenance of foster family care provider files. The child protection administrator stated that foster child files were permanent records and foster care provider records were retained in the district offices as long as a foster parent provided service. Yet the foster care specialist stated that material was inconsistently maintained. For example, some recent foster family care records were destroyed while others still exist from the 1920s and 1930s. Additionally, the foster care specialist and the child protection administrator reported that, in preparation for the DCYF's move to the Brown Building in 1998, some foster care program data were destroyed. Other foster care data were lost in temporary storage. Historical data were reportedly lost when data in the CIS were ported over to BRIDGES. The destruction of DCYF files is inconsistent with the requirements of State law. Essential information that can not be recreated may have been lost. Data loss has limited program evaluation by internal and external entities.

A federal ACF pilot review of DCYF practices issued in 1998 recommended that the DCYF design, test, and implement a comprehensive, integrated management information reporting system and that support staff be trained as automated and manual records management specialists. The Eric L. Oversight Panel recommended in its 1999 and 2000 reports that the division develop a clear project plan for meeting its Eric L. obligations. Information reporting was noted as an essential element of such a plan. The LBA's 1993

4.2 Information Management (Continued)

Observation No. 23: The DCYF Should Adequately Manage Foster Family Care Program Information (Continued)

Child Settlement Program and 1998 Juvenile Justice Organization performance audit reports observed a similar lack of management information in other DCYF program areas.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the DCYF develop and maintain a comprehensive policy to adequately manage program information that supports management control over, and the reporting of, foster family care related program operations, and monitors compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. DCYF concurs that it uses an array of methods to collect and store information related to the foster family care program. The systems presently used to manage this information are the Bridges automated case management system, manual collection of information by the foster care staff, which information is retained in excel spreadsheets, child specific paper case files for children receiving services from DCYF (maintained in the district office) and provider specific paper licensing files for foster parents licensed by DCYF. DCYF acknowledges that the lack of integration of Bridges and the information separately maintained in an excel program should be remedied. At the request of the foster family program specialist, members of the Bridges staff prepared a change request to provide for the collection by Bridges of the information presently being managed by the foster care program staff in the excel format. Given that the resources allocated by the General Court to the Bridges system are limited, the DCYF management team is responsible for prioritizing all Bridges change requests in a manner that addresses the most pressing informational technology needs within the available resources.

In addition to the information management described above, the DCYF utilizes two commercial-off-the-shelf automated data management tools, one which assists in the data management of the Teen Independent Living Program and one that links New Hampshire to the nation-wide administration of the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children and the Interstate Compact on Juveniles (ICPC/ICJ). While the DCYF agrees that these two “off-the-shelf” applications are not integrated into the Bridges system, in the case of the ICPC/ICJ application, the software enables DCYF to be connected to the nationwide ICPC/IJC network. The use of the Teen Independent Living application was the result of DCYF’s assessment of the quality of this application, the program need for it, and the cost in time and resources to develop an alternative approach in Bridges. The Information technology staff within DCYF are not aware that the fact that the Teen Independent Living and ICPC/IJC applications are not integrated with other DHHS information systems has reduced their effectiveness or the availability of the program relevant information and reports necessary to effectively manage these aspects of the foster family care programs.

4.2 Information Management (Continued)

Observation No. 23: The DCYF Should Adequately Manage Foster Family Care Program Information (Continued)

DCYF does not concur with the statement that “Historical data were reportedly lost when data in the CIS were ported over to Bridges”. As noted in our response to Observation 22, according to the Bridges Project Manager, Bridges contains all foster care data for all children on CIS at the time of conversion. Earlier records are stored on tape and are accessible if needed.

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care

Some children for whom foster care placements are appropriate may require intensive, structured levels of services. The DCYF fulfills its obligation to meet the needs of these children through therapeutic level foster care placements: therapeutic foster care, individual service options, and individualized placements. We offer more information below.

Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC)

The DCYF designed TFC to provide therapeutic services under He-C 6350.20 “to youth who do not present a danger to self or others, but have chronic mental, emotional, physical and/or behavioral problems that require individual supervision and consistent programmatic structure, in a treatment intensive family environment.” He-C 6350.20 also requires TFC be provided by a family-centered agency, its licensed foster parents, and clinical support staff. TFC agencies are responsible for recruiting and retaining therapeutic foster family parents. Foster parents must meet State foster family care licensing requirements for general foster care, and have a year’s experience in social services, education, medical services, or a related human services field. At least one foster parent must always be available for placement supervision, and can care for no more than one foster child other than a sibling group. Each foster parent is required to receive a minimum of 24 hours of yearly training related to care for the child in the respective placement. Foster parents are supported by family specialists, who must average overseeing no more than seven TFC homes.

The DCYF contracted with certified and licensed in-state TFC child placing agencies to provide care and foster homes. The agencies had to meet various request for proposal (RFP) criteria and certification for payment requirements, including compliance with requirements for Medicaid-covered services in residential facilities. Initially, the State contracted with three TFC child placing agencies; currently there are two that combine to serve the State.

Individual Service Option (ISO)

ISO placements, according to He-C 6350.21, were designed to provide services to adolescents with mental, emotional, physical and/or behavioral problems who need therapeutic interventions and special supervision. ISO rules allow a range of related

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care (Continued)

services including care in foster family homes, residential facilities, and independent living arrangements. We found that 94 percent of the placements were foster family care. ISO foster family care providers must be compliant with State foster family care licensing rules for general foster care. There is no requirement for additional yearly training related to the needs of a child in placement.

The DCYF uses a single certified and licensed child placing agency and its foster family care providers for ISO foster care placements. ISO foster family care is not available throughout the State. No ISO contract was issued; the DCYF considers the agency a vendor. The provider also must be compliant with various certification for payment standards including compliance with requirements for Medicaid-covered services in residential facilities.

Individualized Placement (IP)

The DCYF utilized this therapeutic level provider category to provide services to children in foster family care placements. With one exception, providers were not certified, licensed, contracted, or vendored. The one exception was a licensed child-placing agency that was contracted previously to provide TFC. There is no mention of IPs in certification for payment standards for residential facilities.

Our analysis found that the DCYF did not consistently follow State contracting requirements in acquiring therapeutic level foster care services. In addition, ISO services were provided to non-adolescents. We found that there are no procedures in place to ensure the therapeutic level foster care system fully serves its intended population or operates cost-effectively.

Observation No. 24

The DCYF Should Adhere To State Contracting Requirements In Acquiring Certain Therapeutic Level Foster Care Services

The DCYF did not consistently follow State contracting requirements in acquiring therapeutic level foster care services. RSA 126-A: 5, II, authorizes the DHHS commissioner to enter into contracts necessary to serve the department's clients, subject to the approval of

the Governor and Executive Council. State contracting procedural mandates include publicizing a request for proposal, competitive bidding or justification for non-competitive procurement, Governor and Executive Council approval for contracts over certain thresholds, and attorney general approval. Prior to February 1994, the monetary thresholds above which contracts were to be submitted to Governor and Executive Council were \$500 for personnel services and \$1,000 for other services. After February 1994, these thresholds rose to \$2,500 and \$5,000 respectively.

Throughout the audit period, the DCYF engaged three types of providers of therapeutic level foster care services to meet the needs of children: TFC, ISO, and IP. Our analysis indicates that only the DCYF's acquisition of TFC services conformed to State contracting

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care (Continued)

Observation No. 24: The DCYF Should Adhere To State Contracting Requirements In Acquiring Certain Therapeutic Level Foster Care Services (Continued)

requirements, otherwise procurement of therapeutic level foster care services was unregulated. According to DCYF and provider staff, these three provider types delivered similar services to children. Although DCYF placement data did not allow us to determine how many children received therapeutic level services during the audit period, we provide a conservative estimate of children who received each type of care.

1. Therapeutic Foster Care. Through DCYF contracts with certified and licensed in-state TFC providers, care was provided for at least 202 children during the audit period. TFC contracting procedures conformed to generally accepted State practice. More recent contracts introduced performance criteria to measure service delivery and provide accountability. Contract oversight included annual on-site reviews, corrective action plans to address deficiencies, technical assistance visits, and quarterly self-reporting by the agencies beginning in 2000.

2. Individual Service Options. The DCYF established open-ended “vendoring” arrangements, instead of a contract, with a single certified and licensed provider to provide care for at least 198 children during the audit period. The children were the responsibility of the DCYF but were placed in foster family homes under the supervision of the non-contracted provider. The DCYF director reported that the division solicited for ISO service via the RFP process, but we could not substantiate this through documentation or interviews with other DCYF personnel. Vendoring arrangements lacked performance criteria to measure service delivery or provide accountability. The provider did receive a biennial on-site review and an informal technical assistance visit during off-years.

3. Individualized Placement. The DCYF utilized a third category of providers to care for at least 79 children during the audit period. With one exception, providers were not certified, licensed, contracted, or vendored. The one exception, a licensed child-placing agency, was not certified or contracted to provide IP services. The DCYF neither publicized the need for IP services nor utilized an RFP process to acquire them. The DCYF clinical director approved placements on an ad hoc basis. DCYF district offices reportedly licensed foster family homes for some providers of IP services; the service providers supported homes and foster children. When contracts were used, no Governor and Executive Council approval was sought. The DCYF was required to annually review provider treatment plans and budgets, but the division conducted no on-site visits or other detailed reviews.

The DCYF lacks adequate management oversight in this area. The DCYF lacks rules, policies, and procedures administering the contracting process. The DCYF financial administrator acknowledged the need for rules, policies, and procedures governing individual placement providers and that the rules needed to be followed.

By not following State contracting procedures for ISO and IP services, the DCYF operated without Governor and Executive Council approval, public scrutiny, and Attorney General

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care (Continued)

Observation No. 24: The DCYF Should Adhere To State Contracting Requirements In Acquiring Certain Therapeutic Level Foster Care Services (Continued)

review of contract arrangements. The DCYF may have limited therapeutic level provider competition by not advertising the need for services, contrary to State law. Effectively, the DCYF sole-sourced contracts without authority.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DHHS:

- **Comply with State contracting practice in procuring ISO and individualized placement contracts, to include obtaining Governor and Executive Council approval.**
- **Cease vendoring therapeutic foster care services.**
- **Implement policies, procedures, and internal controls to support the requirements of State contracting practice.**
- **Conduct training that may be required to ensure adherence to these requirements.**

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. The observation identifies three categories of services for foster care children: therapeutic foster care, individual service option and individualized placement. The department concurs that the division has followed formal contract procedures for the therapeutic foster care services, and that it has a provider enrollment process for the remaining two categories.

The Department does not concur that the DCYF lacks authority to enter into enrolled provider arrangements with its ISO and IP providers. The department's authority to enter into these arrangements is set forth in RSA 170-G:4 XVII and XVIII, and in RSA 169-B:40, 169-C:27 and 169-D:29.

RSA 170-G:4 XVII and XVIII provide that the department has the statutory power and duty to establish rates and to certify providers for all services, placements and programs which are paid for by the department pursuant to RSA 169-B:40, 169-C:27 and 169-D:29. RSA 169-B:40, 169-C:27 and 169-D:29 direct the department to pay for certified provider's services, placements and programs "whenever an order creating liability for expenses is issued by the court..." This statutory scheme both recognizes the need of the department to be able to respond in a timely manner to court ordered services and placements and authorizes the department to meet that need through a provider enrollment process.

Moreover, virtually all foster care children services derive from a court order for services for children experiencing or at-risk of abuse and neglect, children in need of services and

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care (Continued)

Observation No. 24: The DCYF Should Adhere To State Contracting Requirements In Acquiring Certain Therapeutic Level Foster Care Services (Continued)

children identified as delinquents. Court-ordered services are invariably time-sensitive, both because the needs of the child are exigent and because service delivery is immediate upon order of the court.

The state's formal contracting process leading to a Governor and Council-approved contract is a lengthy process that frequently takes more than fifteen weeks from the development and initial release of a request for proposals, receipt and evaluation of responses, negotiation of a contract, approval of the contract by the department, Office of the Attorney General, the Department of Administrative Services, and finally, the Governor and Council.

Clearly, a court order for services to begin immediately would not be satisfied if a fifteen week procurement cycle is embarked upon by the Division for each and every foster care child.

Because of this lengthy process, the Department developed, implemented and operated a provider enrollment system beginning in 1976 for Medicaid services and later modified it to incorporate childcare and a broad array of court-ordered children's services. This provider enrollment system was operating, both before and during the audit period of the 1993 LBA Audit of the DCYF settlement account and was not criticized by that audit. This method of provider enrollment and payment for services has been recognized during operating and capital budget processes by the Governor, House and Senate for many bienniums. It has been further acknowledged with the approval of computer-based information systems acquisition, development, implementation and operation contracts at various levels of approval in the legislative and executive branches of government, including Governor and Council.

In many instances, the services purchased through a provider enrollment system are defined in a federally required state plan filed and approved by the federal funding agency. In addition, many of the services are defined in the formal administrative rules submitted to and adopted by the Legislature's Joint Committee on Administrative Rules under the Administrative Procedures Act. Further, many services have standard rates of reimbursement to all providers of identical services. Finally, the Department will enroll any provider willing to agree to the Department's service provision criteria, including rates of reimbursement to eligible individuals. This process complements the contract process and recognizes the need for time-sensitive availability of services to children receiving court ordered services.

The DCYF has more than four thousand providers, approximately one thousand of which are actively devoted to the foster care program. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine ahead of time the number of and amount of services to purchase annually from each contractor, prepare and release requests for proposals for each individual service type, determine how many service units to purchase from each bidder across the geographically-

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care (Continued)

Observation No. 24: The DCYF Should Adhere To State Contracting Requirements In Acquiring Certain Therapeutic Level Foster Care Services (Continued)

varied and demographically-diverse state, enter into contracts with each provider, and then submit the five hundred or so contracts to Governor and Council each June for approval. And it would be equally difficult to then prepare amendments to many, if not all, of the contracts during the year as the number of children and units of services estimated in the initial contract varied from the actual experience during the year.

The DCYF does not have sufficient staff to undertake the enormous additional workload proposed by this observation's recommendation. The division conservatively estimates that it would require ten additional contract specialists and ten additional contract monitors at a cost of \$1,162,817 to contract with, audit and monitor the one thousand enrolled providers which are actively devoted to the foster care program. To contract with, audit and monitor all 4000 of the division's enrolled providers as suggested by the observation would require approximately forty contract specialists and forty contract monitors and cost an estimated \$4,651,270 dollars. It seems equally unlikely that either the Office of the Attorney General or the Department of Administrative Services would have sufficient staff to handle twice the current number of DHHS contracts processed through their offices and on to Governor and Council.

The provider enrollment process was developed to accommodate the time-sensitive nature of medical and court-ordered services, and works well for the DCYF and the DHHS. Any change to restrict service delivery will have an adverse effect on children and will cause the Division and Department to violate court orders for the provision of services.

The department does not concur with the observation to the extent that it suggests that DCYF has not solicited for additional ISO providers. The DCYF has discussed the need for additional ISO services with a variety of organizations including the Children's Directors of Mental Health Centers, the Partners Organization, which consists of residential service providers, the Child and Family Services, the Individualized Service Network and the Monitor organization.

The department does not concur that there is no accountability for the ISO service provider. Accountability for the ISO provider is provided through the licensing and certification process. As a licensed and certified provider, the division's ISO provider receives bi-annual quality assurance and interim year technical assistance visits to insure compliance with licensing and certification standards. If deficiencies are found, a corrective action plan is required and any deficiencies must be addressed.

It is not clear from the observation how the division's data was inadequate for the auditor to determine the number of children who received therapeutic level services during the audit period or how the auditor's estimates of the number of those children was derived.

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care (Continued)

Observation No. 24: The DCYF Should Adhere To State Contracting Requirements In Acquiring Certain Therapeutic Level Foster Care Services (Continued)

LBA Rejoinder:

The focus of the observation is adherence to State contracting requirements in acquiring certain therapeutic level foster care services during the audit period. We note the DCYF reported the following action step in its federally required Comprehensive Child and Family Services Plan for 2000 through 2004: "Increase the number of residential providers which are contracted to provide service, rather than vendored, to provide better control over the quality of service delivery. Ensure all contracts are based on delivering proven effective services." We also note that although the DHHS reports about 1,000 vendors are actively devoted to the foster care system, the department does not report how many are involved in providing therapeutic level services.

The LBA observation details the lack of any governing process for acquiring IP services, "provider enrollment" or otherwise. This is corroborated in the auditee's response to Observation No. 26 where the DHHS states "...Individualized Placements utilized the services of providers that were not certified or licensed."

The observation reports that accountability over the ISO provider is less than that over TFC providers, even though they serve a similar population of foster children.

Observation No. 25

Individual Service Option Foster Care Placements Should Be According To Rules

One child placing agency is certified and utilized by the DCYF for placement of adolescent children with extreme needs requiring "specialized supervision and therapeutic interventions". These placements,

known as ISOs, may include care in foster family homes among other services. Personnel reported that the majority of ISO placements are in foster family homes; 46 of 49 (94 percent) ISO placements were in foster family homes as of November 2000.

Although administrative rule He-C 6350.21(a) requires that ISOs "provide services to adolescents", DCYF and agency personnel reported that non-adolescent foster children receive ISO placements. During the audit period, children receiving placement ranged from preschool age through 21 years old. According to analysis of ISO provider data, 30 percent of the ISO placements during November 2000 were children under the age of 13.

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care (Continued)

Observation No. 25: Individual Service Option Foster Care Placements Should Be According To Rules (Continued)

Recommendation:

We recommend that the DCYF adhere to the administrative rules governing ISO placements. Should the DCYF believe the ISO program is appropriate for non-adolescents, it should work with the DHHS to promulgate any necessary changes to the administrative rules.

Auditee Response:

DO NOT CONCUR. DHHS believes that an observation about individual service options is beyond the scope of the audit. Simply because the services provided pursuant to an Individual Services Option may involve residence in licensed foster home[s] as the residential component of the service does not bring the evaluation of this distinct service within the scope of the audit. Under existing certification rules, ISO providers are certified to provide ISO services; they are not certified as providers of foster care. The ISO service includes a wide array of services, including case management, residential services, and rehabilitative services such as group counseling or substance abuse services, that are necessary to keep children with significant needs out of more restrictive placements.

While the DHHS believes that the observation is beyond the scope of the audit, it does acknowledge, as stated in its response to Observation No. 26, that some non-adolescents have been placed in ISOs contrary to administrative rules. The administrative rules relative to ISOs contemplate that ISO services will be provided to adolescents with mental, emotional, physical and behavioral problems that require specialized supervision. The Division's experience, however, has been that some non-adolescents also need this level of service and the Division has on occasion placed these non-adolescents with ISO providers. Current Division practice, however, requires state office review and approval of a waiver for all non-adolescent placements with an ISO provider. The Division intends to seek a change to the administrative rules regarding ISO placements to allow for the placement of appropriate non-adolescents with ISO providers.

LBA Rejoinder:

The focus of the observation is DCYF noncompliance with ISO rules. The observation notes, and the DHHS concurs, that DCYF did not adhere to its administrative rules governing ISO placements; ninety-four percent (46 of 49) of ISO placements were in foster family homes. *Government Auditing Standards* require auditors to examine and report on significant issues of noncompliance uncovered during audit procedures.

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care (Continued)

Observation No. 26

The DCYF Therapeutic Level Foster Care System Needs Improvement

The DCYF's therapeutic level foster care system should support children with therapeutic needs with certified, licensed providers in foster family home settings. The therapeutic level system needs improvement.

The system has not fully served its intended population, operated cost-effectively, or met statutory requirements. Nor was it regulated by consistently applied or non-expired rules. It lacked policies, procedures, internal controls, supervision, and management attention.

Three child placing agencies were initially contracted to place 21 children each in TFC. The DCYF did not renew one agency's contract due to low recruitment of foster homes. Contract requirements for the two remaining providers were subsequently increased to 30 children each, but neither agency met that requirement during the audit period. DCYF district offices even assisted one of the providers in its recruitment efforts.

The DCYF also used ISO and IPs as alternatives to TFC. Issues with these included:

- The ISO agency reported that homes are not available throughout the State, and the agency had a waiting list. The DCYF's clinical director would like to see more ISOs in use, and other DCYF personnel reported a need for more ISO services.
- As discussed in Observation No. 25, the ISOs are required to serve adolescents, yet younger children received ISO placements. The clinical supervisor reported that the DCYF should get waivers to allow underage children into ISO placements, yet admitted that waivers were rarely used. However, therapeutic providers are required to obtain waivers based on guidelines in the Certification for Payment Standards He-C 6350.48.
- The provider that did not have its TFC contract renewed was used by the DCYF as an IP provider. The provider reported it was serving the same population after becoming an IP provider. As noted in Observation No. 24, we question the DCYF's contracting procedures over IP providers.
- The DCYF's use of non-licensed, non-certified providers for IP services increased the State and county share of costs because the services were not eligible for federal Medicaid reimbursement. Certification is required by State law and administrative rules in order to compensate providers, and licensure is necessary to receive federal reimbursement for eligible costs. The DCYF knew that at least one of the providers was a for-profit agency that could not receive federal foster care funding. The DCYF eliminated the entity from consideration as a TFC agency because it could not receive federal funds but still used the entity as an IP provider.
- The DCYF applies unequal standards regarding the time each provider type has to place a child who requires therapeutic level foster care. Longer placement periods increase the likelihood of obtaining a good match between child and foster family home. TFC agencies are allowed ten days, the ISO agency up to eight weeks, and IP providers up to 60 days. We discuss elsewhere that the DCYF applied inconsistent oversight standards to TFC, ISO, and IP providers.
- Administrative rules require each TFC home provider to have a minimum of 24 hours of training annually, but ISO and IP homes have no similar training requirement.

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care (Continued)

Observation No. 26: The DCYF Therapeutic Level Foster Care System Needs Improvement (Continued)

The DCYF lacked reports and data, such as the number and location of, and placement data for, children in all types of therapeutic level foster care. The DCYF also lacked detailed expenditure data for IPs.

The DCYF lacked formal criteria and processes to help ensure that only the population of therapeutic level children received TFC or ISO therapeutic level foster care placements. Nor did the DCYF have rules, policies, or procedures to determine a foster child's eligibility for IP services. Communication and arrangements for TFC and ISO placements were reportedly made at the district office level but control was inadequate, lacking review to ensure placements served the therapeutic level population.

According to the DCYF clinical director, the DCYF residential program specialist, one assessment supervisor, and other DCYF personnel, as well as a private child placing agency program director, lack of therapeutic level placement openings with licensed, contracted child placing agencies has resulted in some children being placed in more restrictive residential group settings. In addition, the DCYF residential program specialist and two private child placing agency personnel reported therapeutic level foster children have also been placed in the general foster care population. Finally, the DCYF residential program specialist and a foster care licensing specialist reported that children appropriate for general foster family homes had been placed in therapeutic placements, which would appear to limit the availability of therapeutic level placements during the audit period.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the DCYF overhaul the therapeutic level foster care system so that children who require therapeutic level services receive needed services from contracted, licensed therapeutic level providers. The DCYF should develop criteria, policies, and procedures for district offices to use when seeking to place children in therapeutic level placements.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. The department concurs that there is a need for additional ISO providers. The division is aware of the need and has discussed with many of its other providers the possibility of providing for this level of service delivery. Currently, however, the Division has only one licensed and certified provider for this service.

The department concurs that some non-adolescents have been placed in ISOs contrary to administrative rules. The administrative rules relative to ISOs contemplate that ISO services will be provided to adolescents with mental, emotional, physical and behavioral problems that require specialized supervision. The Division's experience, however, has been that some non-adolescents also need this level of service and the Division has on occasion placed these non-adolescents with ISO providers. The Division acknowledges that it has not

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care (Continued)

Observation No. 26: The DCYF Therapeutic Level Foster Care System Needs Improvement (Continued)

consistently obtained waivers prior to the ISO placement for these non-adolescents as required by administrative rule. Current Division practice, however, requires state office review and approval of a waiver for all non-adolescent placements with an ISO provider. The Division intends to seek a change to the administrative rules regarding ISO placements to allow for the placement of appropriate non-adolescents with ISO providers.

The department does not concur that the division's use of IP services increased costs to the State and Counties. The Division acknowledges that Individualized Placements utilized the services of providers that were not certified or licensed. The observation is incorrect, however, to the extent that it implies that the Division's use of IP services increased the costs to the State and Counties. Individualized Placements are developed to meet the particularized needs of children whose behaviors or disabilities cannot be managed in regular foster care, TFC or in an ISO setting. Absent IPs, these children would undoubtedly be placed in residential care. The costs to the State and Counties of residential care, even with Medicaid reimbursement, would likely exceed the costs of the individualized placement services provided.

The department does not concur with the observations suggestion that placement times for children in therapeutic foster care should be standardized regardless of provider type. The time within which a provider has to assess and place a child varies appropriately with the need to particularize the service delivery to the needs of the child. TFCs are allowed by contract 10 days. Additional time is allowed for the more particularized service delivery of ISOs and IP.

The department does not concur with the observation's suggestion that ISO and IP foster homes do not participate in ongoing training. Administrative rules require 24 hours of training for TFC home providers. While there are no similar rules for ISO and IP homes, the Division's ISO provider provides training which regularly exceeds that required by administrative rule and all IP foster homes are required to participate in ongoing training as part of their foster home licensing requirements.

The department does not concur that the division lacks adequate location and placement data for children in therapeutic level foster care or that it lacks detailed expenditure data for its IPs. The Division, in conjunction with the responsible provider, maintains location and placement data for children in all types of therapeutic level foster care. Individualized placement cost data was provided to the auditor. Without more information from the auditor, the department cannot respond to the observation's criticism that the reported data lacked sufficient detail.

The department concurs that some children in need of therapeutic foster care are placed at inappropriate levels within the foster care system. The Department acknowledges that at any point in time there are likely to be gaps in its service delivery system. These gaps can be created by, among other things, the particular needs of the child or the unavailability of

4.3 Therapeutic Level Foster Care (Continued)

Observation No. 26: The DCYF Therapeutic Level Foster Care System Needs Improvement (Continued)

appropriate services or placements. While these gaps in service delivery, on occasion do result in inappropriate level placements for children within the foster care system, such placements are the exception and not the rule.

LBA Rejoinder:

The DHHS responds that children in IP placements have behaviors or disabilities that can not be managed in TFCs or ISOs, and states, “Absent IPs, these children would undoubtedly be placed in residential care.” However, during the audit we were told that therapeutic level children were sometimes placed in general foster care as well as various therapeutic level placements, and each part of therapeutic level care actually served a similar population of children. We disagree that the costs to the State and counties were not higher for children placed with non-licensed, non-certified providers, than had these children been placed with licensed and certified therapeutic level providers who would receive Medicaid reimbursements.

The observation does not recommend that TFC, ISO, and IP have the same amount of time to place children. We do view as problematic that the same child for whom a TFC provider fails to find a home may be referred to ISO or IP, both of which have longer periods of time to find a suitable home consistent with the child’s needs.

It remains a fact that there are no training requirements similar to TFC, or means to enforce them, for ISO or IP, despite the department’s willingness to rely on the good faith of the ISO provider to “regularly exceed” training requirements.

Our requests to the department for location and placement data for children in ISO and IP resulted in reports from the division that gave placement locations as the child placing agency’s address, not their foster home. We reiterate that IP cost data differed from financial reports by \$1.3 million.

4.4 Management Controls

Management is responsible for instituting controls over programs and their operations. Effective management controls are essential to achieving the proper conduct of government business with full accountability for its resources. Controls include organization, policies, and procedures providing reasonable assurance that: programs achieve their intended results; resources are safeguarded from waste, fraud, and mismanagement; laws and regulations are followed; and reliable and timely information is obtained, maintained,

4.4 Management Controls (Continued)

reported, and used for decision making. These controls should be integrated into all aspects of agency operation including planning, organizing, directing, and controlling operations.

The DCYF foster family care program management controls need improvement in a number of areas, including workload analysis and standards, and supervision by and within the State and district offices. A lack of appropriate internal controls inhibits the division's ability to meet program objectives, follow statutes and laws, maintain reliable and timely information for decision making, and protect scarce program resources.

Observation No. 27

The DCYF Should Develop And Implement Workload Standards

The DCYF has not conducted a comprehensive workload study of foster care related staff for at least 16 years, despite several recommendations to complete such a study.

Management control and management's ability to achieve programmatic results rely, in part, on sound personnel practices. Sound personnel practices include appropriate staff workloads. Workload is defined as the amount of work required to successfully manage a case and bring it to resolution. Workload necessarily includes direct service provision adjusted for case complexity, staff experience, and other factors as well as non-casework tasks such as travel, training, supervision, data entry, meetings, other staff temporary absences, and the like. Caseload is defined as the number of recipients of services provided by a staff member.

Our 1993 Child Settlement Program and 1998 Juvenile Justice Organization performance audits reported the juvenile services workload standard deficiency. In both audits, we recommended adoption of related administrative rules, which have been statutorily required since January 1988. The division's response to the 1993 audit recommendation stated that juvenile service workload standards would be completed by October 1, 1993, yet our 1998 audit revealed that the division still had not developed required standards. The DCYF's response to our 1998 recommendation to develop and adopt rules for a workload formula stated, "As recognized by RSA 170-G:3 (III) the practical value of any workload guidelines is determined by available funding." Additionally, the 1998 federal ACF program review of the DCYF recommended that the division conduct a thorough workload analysis of child protection and juvenile services based on nationally recognized standards.

During our current audit, the DCYF provided documents that reported the division:

- commenced development of workload and caseload standards for all the division's services in early 1999,
- formed a workload committee in late 2000, and
- would complete related analysis after June 2002.

Division policy established interim workload standards for child protective service workers and foster care licensing workers in 1985. Because the DCYF adopted no final standards, the interim standards defaulted to final standard status. However, the DCYF does not

4.4 Management Controls (Continued)

Observation No. 27: The DCYF Requires Workload Analysis And Standards (Continued)

follow this workload policy. Nor does the policy provide for adjustments to the workload for case-specific issues such as complexity and number of family members within one case, or for non-casework tasks such as travel, data entry, and training requirements. Nationally recognized bodies such as the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services, the Child Welfare League of America, the National Advisory Committee for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Institute of Judicial Administration/American Bar Association have developed workload and caseload guidelines for child protection and juvenile services.

The lack of analytically established workload standards undermines the division's management control environment and inhibits its control activities including supervision. DCYF management and staff reported that there is more work for field staff and supervisors than can be accomplished with available personnel. Excessive workloads reportedly impede staff and supervisors from providing quality services to children and families and lessen assurances of safety and security for children in placement.

Recommendation:

We recommend the DCYF:

- **Conduct a workload analysis.**
- **Determine workload standards for foster care related staff and supervisors.**
- **Determine caseload standards for foster care related staff.**
- **Adopt policies and procedures governing caseloads and workload standards and ensure adherence to these standards.**
- **Monitor workloads and adjust standards as needed.**
- **Adopt administrative rules governing the workload formula, duties, and standards for JPPOs consistent with State law, as well as for other juvenile probation and parole staff.**
- **Consistently define a case.**

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. The Department concurs that RSA 170-G: 3 III and 170-G: 15 contemplate the establishment of a workload formula for Juvenile Probation and Parole Officers. The DCYF is in the process of developing workload and caseload standards for its Juvenile Probation and Parole Officers. In 1997, with the assistance of the OJJDP, the DCYF developed a needs assessment for juvenile offenders. Based on that work, a draft set of workload guidelines was produced. The risk and needs assessment tools from the draft workload guidelines, as well as the caseload matrix, are currently being piloted in several of the DCYF's District Offices.

4.4 Management Controls (Continued)

Observation No. 27: The DCYF Requires Workload Analysis And Standards (Continued)

As noted by the observation, state law does not require child protection workload standards. The Department, however, concurs that it should develop child protection workload standards in order to insure that quality services are provided to children and families. The DCYF, through its strategic planning committee, has commenced the development of workload standards, using as guidelines, the caseload recommendations of the Council on Accreditation for Children and Family Services and those of the Child Welfare League of America. The DCYF's strategic planning committee is currently in the process of finalizing recommendations for workload standards.

Since 1995, the DCYF has had ongoing internal discussions with the Department relative to DCYF staffing needs. However, in January of 1995, the Commissioner was requested by the legislature to cut \$32 million dollars in the DHHS budget. In the context of the DHHS re-organization, several key management positions were eliminated – the Deputy Director, Assistant Director, 6 Area Administrator positions, the Bureau Chief position for Child and Family Services, a Program Specialist position for Intake and Assessment and a Program Specialist for Family Services. In addition, in October 1997, 14 DCYF state office and field staff positions were laid-off and another twenty-two positions frozen. During the time period 1995 – 1999 discussions internal to the Department regarding DCYF's request for additional staff went unheeded. In SFY '00, the newly appointed Commissioner of DHHS was able to reallocate a limited number of existing departmental positions to DCYF. As part of its 2002-2003 budget, the Department has requested on behalf of the DCYF, authorization for 57 additional positions in SFY 2002 and 44 additional positions in SFY 2003. The estimated cost for the 57 positions in SFY02 is \$2,487,520. Maintaining the 57 positions from SFY02 and adding the 44 positions in SFY03 is estimated to cost \$5,814,656. To date, all of the requested positions have been removed from the proposed fiscal year 2002-2003 budget.

Observation No. 28

The DCYF Needs To Improve Supervision Of The Foster Family Care Program

The DCYF insufficiently supervises the State's foster family care system. Our 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit report expressed concerns with the division's foster care-related supervision in 13 observations,

making recommendations for improvements to State office management and supervision. In addition, the Eric L. Oversight Panel stated that supervision at the district office level and state office level was generally irregular and reactive and, consequently, did not function in the central role intended by the Eric L. Settlement Agreement.

Supervisory problems exist within the State office and in the twelve district offices and field operations. The State office plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the division meets its statutory and programmatic obligations, provides quality assurance over field operations, and assures the safety and security of children and youth in its care. Indications of insufficient State office supervision include:

4.4 Management Controls (Continued)

Observation No. 28: The DCYF Needs To Improve Supervision Of The Foster Family Care Program (Continued)

- The lack of, or lack of adherence to, State law, administrative rules, policies, procedures, and internal controls governing State office-managed therapeutic level foster care placements as discussed in Observation Nos. 24-26.
- Insufficiencies in the foster care licensing and permitting process and DCYF management's awareness of licensing system deficiencies as discussed in Observation No. 11.
- Insufficient supervisory training.
- BRIDGES related policy and procedure not being followed, inaccurate and incomplete BRIDGES data, and BRIDGES not supporting management's needs or Eric L. reporting as discussed in Observation No. 23.
- Noncompliance with the Eric L. quarterly supervision report review requirement and the requirement to take action to correct performance deficiencies.
- DCYF field staff reporting little or no contact and communication with, or support from, the State office. Fifty-eight percent of DCYF field staff responding to our survey (Appendix E) reported that communication between their respective office and the State office needed improvement; 23 percent indicated no improvement was needed.

DCYF field staff play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and security of children referred to the division, and are integral to field quality assurance. The DCYF director stated that close supervision in district offices would mean better outcomes, better meet local needs, and could have helped avoid the Eric L. lawsuit.

Indications of inadequate district office level supervision include:

- Supervisors signing-off on permit and license applications for homes that had not met State licensing requirements.
- The DCYF director, child protection administrator, foster care specialist, other DCYF staff, a BQI report, and a NHFAPA official expressing concerns with the adequacy of district level supervision. The child protection administrator said inadequate supervision leads to shortcuts and bad decisions.
- BQI recommendations that some district offices establish, maintain, and document weekly supervision.
- Variations in practice among district offices including: reporting foster care recruitment and retention data, monitoring expired licenses, and organizing licensing files.
- Noncompliance with required monthly in-home visits to children in foster family homes and widespread DCYF management and staff knowledge of this condition as discussed in Observation No. 16. The child protection administrator, a program manager, a former DCYF caseworker, and a NHFAPA official stated noncompliance with in-home visit requirements may be due to lack of supervision.
- DCYF supervisors, current and former staff, and 13 percent of DCYF field staff responding to our survey (Appendix E) reporting that required personnel evaluations do not always occur annually.

4.4 Management Controls (Continued)

Observation No. 28: The DCYF Needs To Improve Supervision Of The Foster Family Care Program (Continued)

- The Eric L. monitor and Eric L. Oversight Panel reporting DCYF noncompliance with the requirement that CPSWs develop individual training plans in consultation with supervisors. Only 40 of 172 (23 percent) staff members submitted plans between July 1998 and June 1999. Additionally, the DCYF assistant director stated that before September 2000, staff training was scattered and there was a need for more supervision.
- BRIDGES policies and procedures not being followed, inaccurate and incomplete data in BRIDGES, and field staff that did not consistently meet BRIDGES data entry requirements in spite of requirements that supervisors check BRIDGES data entry.

The director, other DCYF management and staff, and a BQI review reported that there was a lack of district office supervisors due to vacancies. The child protection administrator stated that the DCYF could not meet the ratio of one supervisor to seven workers recommended by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Children and Families, Inc. and the Child Welfare League of America. A DCYF administrator, the foster care specialist, the Eric L. monitor, a DHHS program manager, DCYF staff, and BQI reports commented that staff access to supervisors was limited due to competing demands for supervisor's time, time spent traveling, staff turnover, and high workloads.

Information provided by the BQI, the Eric L. monitor, and the Eric L. Oversight Panel indicated that field staff lacked sufficient time to meet worker training requirements and to develop individual training plans in consultation with supervisors as required by the Eric L. Agreement.

State office managers may have been unable to sufficiently oversee district office case work because, as the Eric L. monitor and Oversight Panel reported, the management reporting system portion of BRIDGES was insufficient to manage programs or supervise district offices as required. No data was available about the frequency of supervision over CPSW staff. The child protection administrator did not receive required supervision reports and could not provide staff corrective action plans to the director. Furthermore, the child protection administrator reported directly supervising district offices at times due to staffing issues, which reduced the administrator's programmatic oversight.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the DCYF:

- **Ensure sufficient management oversight of State office staff.**
- **Ensure sufficient State office oversight of district office supervisors.**
- **Ensure district office supervisors exercise sufficient oversight of field staff.**
- **Develop sufficient standards and job descriptions for foster care related staff and management.**

4.4 Management Controls (Continued)

Observation No. 28: The DCYF Needs To Improve Supervision Of The Foster Family Care Program (Continued)

- **Ensure staff pre-service training requirements, to include supervisory training, are met by all personnel before assuming new duties.**

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. The Division concurs that its ability to provide supervision for foster care related staff has been hampered by a chronic lack of adequate staff resources. This lack of adequate staff resources was exacerbated by the elimination of positions through the HB32 reorganization and the staff lay-offs that occurred during the audit period. Despite these reductions in staff, the division has nevertheless been able to make significant improvements to its supervision of the foster family care program.

As part of the HB 32 reorganization, a significant direct practice support for the division's supervisors was eliminated when the division's area administrator positions were abolished. In 1994 the Division had three senior staff position, 6 Area Administrators, and five state office program specialists overseeing the field. After the reorganization, the Division was left with one senior staff position, one administrator and three program specialists. Staff lay-offs in October 1997 further reduced the Division's ability to adequately supervise the field.

Despite these reductions in staff, the division has made significant improvements to the supervision of its foster family care program by:

- *Adding two Assistant Administrators in 2000 to specifically support the supervisors in field practice. These assistant administrators provide a direct communication link between state office and the field regarding field practice and policy implementation.*
- *Hiring a consultant to work with supervisors to develop standards of supervisory practice. The Division anticipates that this will result in a re-vamping of supervisory training for both new supervisors and for continuing in-service training for existing supervisors.*
- *Conducting, daylong supervisor leadership meetings on a monthly basis to discuss administrative and practice issues. These meetings consist of morning information and workshop sessions with combined CPSW and JPPO supervisors, and afternoon sessions that focus on issues specific to CPSWs and JPPOs.*
- *Providing, throughout the audit period, in excess of 200 trainings and workshops for supervisory staff through the division's staff development unit.*
- *Conducting monthly meetings between the division's adoption and foster care services specialists and the field staff on practice and policy issues.*

4.4 Management Controls (Continued)

Observation No. 28: The DCYF Needs To Improve Supervision Of The Foster Family Care Program (Continued)

- *Utilizing the NH Bridges system and the DHHS computer network e-mail to facilitate communication and the dissemination of policy and procedure.*

The division concurs that supervision at the district office level could be improved. To insure that that occurs, the Division has promulgated policy which provides that it is the expectation that all supervisors will meet weekly with field staff. The state office assistant administrators are working with field supervisors to assure that this supervision occurs and the Bureau of Quality management is monitoring the supervisors' compliance with documentation requirements for the supervision of field staff. The division continues to work on the development of standards for policy and training in supervision and encourages continuing education in approved masters of social work programs for both supervisory and field staff through its partnership with the University of New Hampshire.

The division concurs that there is a need for more supervisory training and increased contact and communication with field staff. The division is working to address that need within the confines of its available resources. As previously noted, the division has added two assistant administrators to support the supervisors in field practice, conducts monthly statewide supervisors meetings, and has contracted with a consultant to work with supervisors to develop standards of supervisory practice. The Divisions Adoption program specialist and the Division's Foster care specialist each conduct monthly meetings with field staff on practice and policy issues. Since the 1997 implementation of Bridges and the DHHS e-mail system, the division has been able to convey information, disseminate policy and procedure, and communicate with supervisory and field staff in a much more timely fashion

The division concurs, that during the audit period, not all CPSWs developed annual individual training plans as required by the Eric L. decree. The division has however, undertaken significant affirmative steps to address this responsibility by providing training to supervisors and careful oversight by the Child Protection Administrator. As a result, in the 6 months from 6/30/99 - 12/31/99, 163 of 174 CPSWs completed the annual Individual Training Plans (AITP) for a 93% completion rate. The division's substantial improvement in this area was recognized by the December 7, 2000 Report of the Eric L. Oversight Panel which states at page 46, "The Panel commends DCYF for bringing itself into compliance with this important responsibility..."

The observation criticizes the division's variations in practice among district offices, its non-compliance with monthly in home visits to children in foster family care and its failure to conduct all annual personnel evaluations in a timely manner. While the division acknowledges deficiencies in these areas, the deficiencies are directly attributable to the division's lack of adequate staffing levels necessary to consistently meet its responsibilities in these areas. The Divisions need for additional resources in order for it to be able to fulfill its substantive responsibilities has been recognized by the SB 65 Final Report of the Study Committee to Review the Field Activities of the DHHS Relative to Children Youth and

4.4 Management Controls (Continued)

Observation No. 28: The DCYF Needs To Improve Supervision Of The Foster Family Care Program (Continued)

Families, the SB 346 Final Report of the Task Force to Study the Foster Care System and the Second Report of the Eric L. Oversight Panel dated December 1, 2000.

The observation bullets a number of issues related to DCYF supervision for district office supervisors and field staff. The first, second and fourth bullets in the first series of bulleted items in the observation and the first and fourth bullets in the second series of bulleted items in the observation however, are of marginal relevance to the DCYF's supervision of its foster care related staff and merely restate the LBA's conclusions from prior observations to which the DCYF has already responded in detail at other points in the audit report.

Observation No. 29

DCYF Management Control Of The Foster Family Care Program Should Be Improved

The DCYF has exercised inadequate management control of the foster family care program. Management controls are the organization, policies, and procedures developed to provide reasonable assurance

that: programs achieve their intended results; resources are safeguarded from waste, fraud, and mismanagement; laws and regulations are followed; and reliable and timely information is obtained, maintained, reported, and used for decision making. Controls should be integrated into all aspects of agency operation including planning, organizing, directing, and controlling operations.

As we discuss in:

- Observation Nos. 1-4, 8-11, 14-18, 20, and 26, DCYF foster family care program objectives were unmet;
- Observation Nos. 5-13, 16, 19, 20, and 22-28, the DCYF did not comply with the requirements of State law, federal law and rule, State administrative rule and procedure, and the Eric L. Settlement Agreement;
- Observation Nos. 21, 24, and 26, the DCYF inadequately safeguarded resources; and
- Observation Nos. 2, 21-23, 26, and 27, DCYF data were inadequate.

Additionally, as we discuss throughout, the DCYF has not resolved several recommendations made in our prior audits. The resolution of audit recommendations is a significant part of management control.

The DCYF's supervision of the foster family care program and management information system deficiencies has limited its management control capabilities. Furthermore, management information system deficiencies limit the DCYF's capacity to determine program efficiency.

4.4 Management Controls (Continued)

Observation No. 29: DCYF Management Control Of The Foster Family Care Program Should Be Improved (Continued)

Recommendation:

We recommend that the DHHS evaluate its organization, policies, and procedures used to exercise management control over the DCYF by using rigorous program evaluation methodologies.

We also recommend that the DCYF evaluate its organization, policies, and procedures used to exercise management control over the foster family care program and ensure that:

- the program achieves its intended results;
- the program is protected from waste, fraud, and mismanagement;
- laws and regulations are followed; and
- reliable and timely information is obtained, maintained, reported, and used for decision making.

The DHHS should report to the Legislature on division improvements in determining the foster family care program's efficiency and improving the program's effectiveness.

Auditee Response:

CONCUR IN PART. The DCYF concurs that management control of the foster family care program could be improved. In order to improve management control, however, the DCYF must have sufficient resources to meet the numerous mandates and responsibilities that are placed upon it. As previously noted, the division's chronic need for additional resources has been recognized by several independent sources including the Final Report of the Study Committee to Review the Field Activities of the DHHS Relative to Children Youth and Families, the Second Report of the Eric L. oversight Panel dated December 1, 2000 and the Final Report of the Task Force to Study the Foster Care System. In the final report of the Task Force to Study the Foster Care System at page four, the committee stated that it, "...recommends that the state provide additional funding to the Department of Health and Human Services for DCYF to increase the number of caseworkers for foster children, allowing a reasonable ratio of workers to children." Despite such recommendations and the division's own repeated efforts, the division has thus far been unable to acquire the additional resources it needs through the budget process.

The observation references a number of prior observations to which the division has already responded. As noted in the division's responses, the division does not concur with the factual and legal positions asserted or with the conclusions drawn in many of those observations. The division would note, that of the audit's 29 observations, the division does not concur at all with 2 of the observations and does not concur in significant part with 26 of the

4.4 Management Controls (Continued)

Observation No. 29: DCYF Management Control Of The Foster Family Care Program Should Be Improved (Continued)

observations. Regardless of the merits of the observations, however, the division believes that it will require substantial resources to address many of the audit's recommendations. The division estimates that:

- *To address the LBA's recommendation in observation #3 to improve foster care matching through the establishment of statewide foster care assessment homes in each district office area would cost \$3,262,500 dollars.*
- *To address the LBA's recommendation in observation #14, to seek adequate foster care reimbursement rates consistent with the USDA Level 1 rates would cost \$2,346,690 dollars.*
- *To address the LBA's recommendation in observation #16 to make required monthly in-home visits to foster family children and improve overall responsiveness to foster parents would cost, according to a recent workload analysis based on national standards, \$8,008,978 dollars.*
- *To address the LBA's recommendation in observation #18, to improve responsiveness to foster parents particularly during after house and weekends through "on-call" staffing would cost \$191,423 dollars.*
- *To address the LBA's recommendation in observation #22, to provide enhanced support for Bridges would cost \$336,947 dollars.*
- *To address the LBA's recommendations in observation #24 to cease vendoring services and to contract with, monitor and audit the division's enrolled providers would cost \$1,162,817 dollars.*

In order for the DCYF to meet its affirmative obligation to provide adequate management control of the family foster care program and to adequately address the numerous recommendations cited within the audit document, additional resources are required.

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES
FOSTER FAMILY CARE**

CONCLUSION

Every child who enters foster family care requires the help of a licensed, trained foster parent with abilities well-suited to the child's individual needs. Licensed foster parents require sufficient supports to be able to meet, and want to continue to meet, the diverse challenges of foster parenting. The Department of Health and Human Services, Division for Children, Youth and Families management and personnel are required to fulfill the mission of assisting children who need services within the foster care system, and adults who elect to become and remain foster family parents.

Our performance audit of the DCYF's foster family care system found significant issues with the program's management and operations. Although we have no doubt as to the desire and willingness of DCYF personnel to provide appropriate and reasonable oversight for the family foster care system, we nevertheless found problems regarding whether oversight of State and district office program personnel is sufficient, and whether oversight ensures that State resources are used cost-effectively and appropriately.

Our findings indicate the system lacks sufficient, timely adopted, and statutorily required administrative rules. The system needs to improve upon its: 1) ability to match the varied needs of foster children with a sufficient pool of trained, licensed foster family care providers; 2) licensing function including oversight; 3) support of foster parents including communication and reimbursement-related activities; 4) in-home oversight of placed foster children; 5) supervision of State and district offices; and 6) detailed programmatic and financial reporting, and management information system. Our analysis of therapeutic level foster family care questions whether the system fully serves its intended population, operates cost-effectively, or meets statutory requirements. The DCYF could not report the complete cost of foster family care for the audit period, nor easily or reliably provide detailed programmatic expenditures.

Our findings do not suggest that the DCYF's foster family care system has improved sufficiently in areas originally commented upon in the 1993 Child Settlement Program performance audit. We also note that the State's system still needs to demonstrate to the Eric L. Settlement review panel that it has met mutually agreed upon requirements. We hope that the DCYF will be able to do in the future what this report finds yet unrealized – have an effective, efficient, and economical foster family care system.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY OF CURRENT DCYF FOSTER PARENTS

NOTES:

- Responses are in bold.
 - Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
 - Forty of 63 (63 percent) current DCYF foster parents surveyed responded.
 - NR = No response.
-

1. I have been a licensed foster parent for ____ years.

Average: 6.9 years
Range: from 0.5 to 27 years
NR: 6

One current DCYF foster parent commented: We were licensed 25 years ago. We took in our son when he was 10, now he's 35.

2. I have been a permitted foster parent for ____ years.

Average: 2.4 years
Range: from 0.5 to 7 years
NR: 28

3. Since becoming a foster parent, I have cared for _____ (number) foster children, not including respite care.

Average: 18 children
Range: from 1 to 350 children
NR: 0

One current DCYF foster parent commented: Usually long-term, six months plus.

4. Please put a ✓ next to the one answer that best describes your current licensing or permitting status:

- a) I am currently licensed as a foster family parent through the DCYF. **35 (88%)**
- b) I am currently permitted as a foster family parent through the DCYF. **3 (8%)**
- c) I no longer am a DCYF foster family parent. **2 (5%)**

One current DCYF foster parent commented: But haven't had a physical copy of license for more than a year.

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

5. Please indicate for which of the following you currently are licensed or permitted:

(Please put a ✓ for all appropriate responses.)

		Licensed	Permitted
a)	General foster family care provider	25	3
b)	Specialized foster family care provider	13	0
c)	Therapeutic foster family care provider	2	0
d)	Emergency foster care provider	10	0
e)	Assessment foster care provider	0	0
f)	Delinquent child foster family care provider	2	0
g)	CHINS (child in need of services) foster family care provider	3	0

6. Please indicate if you fall within any of the following categories:

Category	Yes	No
a) Crisis foster care provider	6 (33%)	12 (67%)
b) PIC (provisional interim care) provider	2 (13%)	13 (87%)
c) Respite care foster family care provider	17 (65%)	9 (35%)

If you hold, or have ever held, a DCYF foster care permit (not a foster care license), please answer question 7.

7. a) Has your foster home permit ever been extended by the DCYF past its expiration date?

No *(please go to question 8)* **16 (94%)**
 Yes *(please continue with parts 7b and 7c below)* **1 (6%)**
NR: 23

b) For how many weeks has it been extended? **Six weeks**
 c) Why has it been extended? **Until child was 18**

8. Please rate the foster family parent licensing process.

a) Very simple **8 (21%)**
 b) Fairly simple **24 (63%)**
 c) Fairly complicated **6 (16%)**
 d) Very complicated **0 (0%)**
NR: 2

If you rated the process either c. (fairly complicated) or d. (very complicated), please explain your rating in the space below.

Five current DCYF foster parents commented:

- **Too long, too repetitious, and required too many people.**
- **Took several weeks to complete, waiting for fireman inspection and police report, numerous questions to answer and definitely costly to maintain license.**

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

- **Paperwork for needed courses is complicated.**
- **Although copies of trainings are sent to office as completed, they never have records, never see licensing person.**
- **Unfair because the process does not allow for specified individualized situations.**

9. a) Have you ever had any foster child remain in placement with you even though your foster home license was not renewed by its expiration date?

No (please go to question 10) **33 (83%)**
 Yes (please continue with parts 9b and 9c below) **7 (18%)**

b) What was the longest amount of time any child was in placement with you while your license was expired? _____ weeks

Average: 8.6 weeks
Range: from three to 16 weeks
NR: 35

One current DCYF foster parent commented: “Few” weeks.

c) Please list below the reason(s) why the relicensing was not completed by the foster home license expiration date:

Seven current DCYF foster parents commented:

- **Paperwork sent in late by worker/not provided in time. 5**
- **Honestly don't know. Slow? Overlooked? 1**
- **Because he was a jerk, also in-between workers. 1**

7

10. Through which one of the following DCYF district offices are you a foster family home?

a)	Berlin District Office	4	(10%)	g)	Littleton District Office	0	(0%)
b)	Claremont District Office	0	(0%)	h)	Manchester District Office	9	(23%)
c)	Concord District Office	2	(5%)	i)	Nashua District Office	5	(13%)
d)	Conway District Office	3	(8%)	j)	Portsmouth District Office	6	(15%)
e)	Keene District Office	3	(8%)	k)	Rochester District Office	3	(8%)
f)	Laconia District Office	3	(8%)	l)	Salem District Office	1	(3%)
NR:		1					

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

14. Are you a child-specific foster family care provider, that is, are you a foster home only for one or more specific children?

Yes **12 (31%)**
 No **27 (69%)**
 NR: **1**

15. Approximately how long after you were licensed or permitted was a foster child placed in your home? *(Place a ✓ next to the answer that applies to you: one ✓ for permitted, and one ✓ for licensed.)*

<u>Permitted</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Licensed</u>
a) 8	Child was already living in my home	j) 13
b) 4	Less than one week	k) 2
c) 0	One to two weeks	l) 1
d) 2	Two weeks to one month	m) 2
e) 0	One to two months	n) 4
f) 2	Two to six months	o) 7
g) 0	Seven to 12 months	p) 1
h) 0	Over 12 months	q) 0
i) 0	No child has been placed with me yet	r) 0

One current DCYF foster parent commented: Our decision, not DCYF.

16. Please rate the effectiveness of each of the following items in recruiting you as a foster parent. *(Please put a ✓ for each question.)*

		1 = Very effective	2 = Effective	3 = Neither effective nor ineffective	4 = Ineffective	5 = Very ineffective	NR
		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	DCYF television, radio or newspaper announcement	1 3%	16 53%	10 33%	1 3%	2 7%	10
b.	DCYF foster family parent	3 12%	8 31%	14 54%	0 0%	1 4%	14
c.	DCYF recruitment event	0 0%	6 25%	15 63%	1 4%	2 8%	16
d.	A religious organization	2 8%	2 8%	19 73%	0 0%	3 12%	14
e.	A school	0 0%	2 8%	20 83%	0 0%	2 8%	16
f.	A foster child	9 35%	4 15%	12 46%	0 0%	1 4%	14
g.	Having been a foster child	2 9%	0 0%	17 77%	0 0%	3 14%	18

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

1 = Very effective 4 = Ineffective		2 = Effective 5 = Very ineffective		3 = Neither effective nor ineffective			
		1	2	3	4	5	NR
h.	Other (<i>please specify</i>): Eleven comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet. (2) • Wanted to care for children. (2) • Married a foster parent. • Private agency. • Wanted to help a friend's child. • Child specific. • Visited DCYF. • Informational meeting. • Wanted to adopt 	7 70%	3 30%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (ineffective) or 5 (very ineffective), please explain your rating(s) below:

Seven current DCYF foster parents provided one or more comments:

- **a.**
 - **Have not seen or heard TV, radio, or newspaper ads.** 4
 - **Not a factor.** 1
- **b. Not applicable/not a factor.** 2
- **c.**
 - **Not been to a recruitment event.** 3
 - **Not applicable/not a factor.** 2
- **d.**
 - **Not applicable/not a factor.** 2
 - **Church never posted or mentioned foster care.** 1
- **e. Not applicable/not a factor.** 2
- **f. Not applicable/not a factor.** 2
- **g. Not applicable/not a factor.** 3
- **h.** 3
 - **Had a specific child in my home via church, then called the state to get licensed.**
 - **Recruitment talked about at meetings-never seen it put into practice.**
 - **Foster parenting suggested to us by adoption lawyer who thought we needed exposure to children.**

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

17. Please indicate your satisfaction with the overall DCYF foster family parent recruitment efforts:

a) Very satisfactory	1	(3%)
b) Satisfactory	21	(60%)
c) Neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory	12	(34%)
d) Unsatisfactory	1	(3%)
e) Very unsatisfactory	0	(0%)
NR:	5	

*If you responded **d.** (unsatisfactory) or **e.** (very unsatisfactory), please explain your response:*

Two current DCYF foster parents commented:

- **Hardly any foster homes in Manchester.**
- **It is hard with the way the system works (or does not work). I would be hard pressed to recommend foster parenting to anyone I know.**

18. How could the DCYF improve its foster parent recruitment efforts?

Twenty-one current DCYF foster parents commented:

• More advertisement in papers, mailings, posters, TV.	6
• Provide more support, information, higher stipend, improve reputation.	3
• Treat foster parents better.	2
• Don' t know/not involved with recruiting	2
• Direct contact to employers, schools, community centers.	2
• Advertise or speak through churches.	1
• Weekend coverage for foster parents who run into trouble.	1
• Not to promise you things that they can't provide.	1
• More foster parents do the recruiting	1
• Hold an open house about all the rewards about being a foster parent.	1
• Not sure it's needed - could take in more kids but wasn't asked.	1
	<u>21</u>

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

19. Have you been required to make changes to your home in order to meet fire and safety requirements?

- a) No *(Please go to question 20)* **26 (67%)**
- b) Yes *(Please continue below)* **13 (33%)**
- NR 1**

*If you answered **yes**, what changes were you required to make to your home? Please check all that apply, and provide an approximate cost where indicated.*

		Approximate Cost (\$)	Cost Unreimbursed by DCYF (\$)
a)	Add smoke detector(s)	8	Average \$74
b)	Add fire extinguisher(s)	7	\$40
c)	Make adjustments to establish two fire exits from each floor	1	
d)	Alter coal/wood stove to ensure compliance with safety code	0	
e)	Display street address number on house	1	
f)	Add a fence around yard	0	
g)	Other: Five comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water testing • Replace/move water heater • Locking gun cabinet • Fire resistant doors • Add three carbon dioxide detectors 	5	\$366

20. Please indicate the extent you agree or disagree with the respective statements:

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree							
		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a)	My community's foster care-related fire and safety requirements are fair.	23 58%	15 38%	1 3%	1 3%	0 0%	0
b)	Fire and safety requirements hinder potential foster parents from joining the foster parent system.	0 0%	5 13%	3 8%	21 53%	11 28%	0
c)	I was informed of DCYF funding available to offset costs for foster home fire and safety changes.	1 3%	7 18%	4 10%	10 26%	17 44%	1

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

21. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	I am <u>never</u> pressured to accept a foster child placement.	8 21%	17 44%	8 21%	2 5%	4 10%	1
b.	The DCYF always provides a complete description about a child placed with me.	2 5%	13 33%	7 18%	9 23%	8 21%	1
c.	The DCYF always provides sufficient notice before a foster child is placed with me.	2 5%	11 29%	12 32%	10 26%	3 8%	2
d.	Children placed with me are always the requested gender.	4 11%	12 32%	16 43%	5 14%	0 0%	3
e.	Children placed with me are always the requested age group.	3 8%	15 41%	12 32%	7 19%	0 0%	3
f.	School-aged children placed with me come from the school district I live in.	1 3%	5 14%	16 46%	9 26%	4 11%	5
g.	The children placed with me come from the town I live in.	3 8%	5 14%	15 42%	9 25%	4 11%	4
h.	The needs of each child placed with me are always well matched with what I can provide as a foster parent.	6 15%	11 28%	13 33%	6 15%	3 8%	1
i.	I am an appropriate placement for a child with serious health issues.	3 8%	5 13%	12 32%	6 16%	12 32%	2
j.	I am an appropriate placement for a child with serious emotional handicaps.	2 6%	9 25%	10 28%	4 11%	11 31%	4
k.	I am an appropriate placement for a sexually abused child.	1 3%	10 27%	19 51%	1 3%	6 16%	3
l.	I am an appropriate placement for a mentally retarded child.	2 5%	9 24%	10 27%	6 16%	10 27%	3
m.	I am an appropriate placement for a male teen child.	2 5%	8 22%	12 32%	6 16%	9 24%	3
n.	I am an appropriate placement for a female teen child.	2 5%	8 21%	15 39%	5 13%	8 21%	2
o.	I am an appropriate placement for a juvenile delinquent child.	0 0%	7 19%	10 27%	7 19%	13 35%	3
p.	I am an appropriate placement for a CHINS (child in need of services) child.	3 8%	8 22%	16 43%	3 8%	7 19%	3

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Thirty-one current DCYF foster parents provided one or more comments:

- a.
 - o **Have been pressured to accept children more than once.** 4
 - o **In past, not recently.** 1
- b.
 - o **Inadequate information provided.** 8
 - o **Often, I don't have any information as I provide respite.** 1

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

- c.
 - Needed a home immediately, hours notice. 3
 - In some cases DCYF doesn't have any notice so they are unable to give foster parents notice before placement. Foster parents can always say no to a placement. 2
 - One day notice. 2
 - It's hard to give us sufficient notice. 2
 - What happens is especially on Fridays they will promise you anything so they can place child and they can go home. They treat these kids like a piece of furniture and their licensing worker is so two-faced. 1
- d. Never requested. 1
- e. Children not in requested age group. 4
- f.
 - Children from outside school district. 3
 - Haven't had any of these children yet. 1
- g.
 - Children from out-of-town. 4
 - Haven't had any of these children yet. 1
- h. Unable to meet needs. 2
- i.
 - Not appropriate for this type of placement. 11
 - Not trained/do not want to be trained. 2
 - It would depend on the health issues. 1
- j.
 - Not appropriate for this type of placement. 9
 - Not trained/do not want to be trained. 3
 - Have been doing it. 1
- k.
 - Not appropriate for this type of placement. 7
 - Not trained/do not want to be trained. 2
- l.
 - Not appropriate for this type of placement. 8
 - Not trained/do not want to be trained. 4
 - Very little experience with this. 1
 - Would have to meet the child first. 1
- m.
 - Not appropriate for this type of placement. 7
 - Not trained/do not want to be trained. 3
 - Do not want a teenager - bad mix with others. 3
 - Appropriate. 1
- n.
 - Not appropriate for this type of placement. 6
 - Do not want a teenager - bad mix with others. 4
 - Not trained/do not want to be trained. 2

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

- **o.**
 - o **Not appropriate for this type of placement.** **11**
 - o **Not trained/do not want to be trained.** **3**
 - o **Probably appropriate.** **1**
 - o **I was in the Domestic Violence program and when I said no after hearing circumstances (child beat up parent, sibling, grandfather) the juvenile officer was not happy.** **1**
 - o **Need more experience.** **1**
 - **p.**
 - o **Not appropriate for this type of placement.** **7**
 - o **Not trained/do not want to be trained.** **3**
- 143**

22. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about pre-service training:

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree							
My pre-service training provided me sufficient understanding of:		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	My role as a foster parent	9 24%	24 65%	3 8%	0 0%	1 3%	3
b.	The realities of foster parenting	5 14%	20 54%	9 24%	2 5%	1 3%	3
c.	My expected relationship with a foster child's parent(s)	5 14%	17 47%	11 31%	3 8%	0 0%	4
d.	Payment rates to foster parents	5 14%	23 64%	3 8%	4 11%	1 3%	4
e.	How to fill out payment forms	4 11%	16 44%	7 19%	6 17%	3 8%	4
f.	Ways to contact the agency after hours including weekends	4 11%	11 31%	6 17%	11 31%	4 11%	4
g.	Information to be reported to the agency	4 11%	17 49%	8 23%	5 14%	1 3%	5
h.	Services provided by the agency	2 6%	14 40%	5 14%	10 29%	4 11%	5
i.	Discipline of foster children	6 17%	20 56%	6 17%	3 8%	1 3%	4
j.	Foster parent training requirements	7 20%	23 66%	3 9%	2 6%	0 0%	5
k.	Foster parent training availability	7 20%	20 57%	6 17%	2 6%	0 0%	5
l.	Agency policies on foster parent abuse/neglect	7 21%	17 50%	5 15%	3 9%	2 6%	6
m.	Foster care legal aspects	6 17%	10 29%	9 26%	6 17%	4 11%	5
n.	Respite care policy	3 9%	16 47%	8 24%	5 15%	2 6%	6
o.	Transportation reimbursement policy	2 6%	14 40%	9 26%	7 20%	3 9%	5

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
My pre-service training provided me sufficient understanding of:							
p.	Working with a handicapped child	2 6%	10 28%	18 50%	4 11%	2 6%	4
q.	Working with a sexually abused child	3 9%	14 40%	14 40%	2 6%	2 6%	5
r.	Working with a child culturally different	3 8%	13 36%	14 39%	4 11%	2 6%	4
s.	Working with a child racially different	3 8%	13 36%	14 39%	4 11%	2 6%	4
t.	Working with a child of a different religion	3 9%	13 37%	15 43%	2 6%	2 6%	5
u.	Working with a juvenile delinquent	3 9%	8 24%	17 50%	4 12%	2 6%	6
v.	Pre-service trainers were able to fully answer my questions.	7 19%	18 50%	9 25%	2 6%	0 0%	4
w.	Pre-service training scheduling was convenient for me.	7 19%	15 42%	8 22%	5 14%	1 3%	4
x.	During training, experienced foster parents exposed me to the realities of foster parenting.	10 29%	10 29%	10 29%	4 11%	1 3%	5

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Twenty-five current DCYF foster parents provided one or more comments:

- **a.** 2
 - **Subject matter absolutely unrelated to my situation.**
 - **Very important to discuss and understand.**
- **b.** 2
 - **For a novice, reality probably impossible to “teach.”**
 - **Very important to discuss and understand.**
- **c.** 2
 - **Not really been asked to have any relationship with the parents.**
 - **Very important to discuss and understand.**
- **d.**
 - **Not mentioned.** 2
 - **Payment rate is way below what it should be.** 1
 - **Very important to discuss and understand.** 1
- **e.**
 - **Told how to complete forms after child was placed.** 2
 - **Never discussed/had no idea.** 2
 - **Figured it out by trial and error.** 1
 - **Very important to discuss and understand.** 1

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

• f.		
o	Never mentioned.	4
o	After child was placed.	2
o	Impossible to get anybody after hours.	1
o	Difficult to get anybody during the week.	1
o	Only know to call the police after hours-is there something else?	1
o	No way to contact the agency after hours. Should take turns being on call.	1
o	Very important to discuss and understand.	1
• g.		2
o	Need more training.	
o	Very important to discuss and understand.	
• h.		
o	Not made aware of services available/found out elsewhere.	5
o	Information pertaining to services provided seem to come on a “need to know” basis with the worker determining that need.	1
o	I felt I was lied to by the social worker.	1
o	Very important to discuss and understand.	1
• j.	If they want to keep you, they overlook training requirements when renewing your license. If you disagree with them they make it hard on you when relicensing.	1
• k.	If they want to keep you, they overlook training requirements when renewing your license. If you disagree with them they make it hard on you when relicensing.	1
• l.		2
o	Have received training that was not included initially.	
o	Not aware of them.	
• m.		
o	No legal rights.	3
o	Have received training that was not included initially.	1
• n.		
o	Not aware.	2
o	Have received training that was not included initially.	1
• o.		
o	Not trained for or informed.	2
o	Learned of this after via foster parents.	1
o	Have received training that was not included initially.	1
• p.		
o	Have received training that was not included initially.	1
o	Most training in the above areas was covered in specialized foster care training - should be instituted for general care licensing.	1
o	Not trained for or informed.	1

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

•	q.		
	0	Have received training that was not included initially.	1
	0	Most training in the above areas was covered in specialized foster care training - should be instituted for general care licensing.	1
•	r.		
	0	Have received training that was not included initially.	1
	0	Do not recall any training but not a big issue in this area.	1
•	s.		
	0	Have received training that was not included initially.	1
	0	Do not recall any training but not a big issue in this area.	1
•	t.	Have received training that was not included initially.	1
•	u.		
	0	Have received training that was not included initially.	1
	0	Most training in the above areas was covered in specialized foster care training - should be instituted for general care licensing.	1
	0	Not trained for or informed.	1
•	v.		
	0	Information was minimal/insufficient.	4
	0	Training adequate but the reality is the best teacher.	1
•	w.		
	0	Found own non-DCYF trainings.	2
	0	First training nine months after being licensed.	1
	0	Pre-service training not available when I became a foster parent.	1
	0	Courses are unnecessary and inconvenient.	1
	0	It was a great hardship to leave my six children for four hours every Monday. [The specific named DCYF worker] never attempted to understand my position.	1
	0	No training yet.	1
•	x.		
	0	The realities of fostering came with experience.	1
	0	No current foster parents in our class - all trainees.	<u>1</u>
			79

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

23. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about in-service training:

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	I am satisfied with in-service training I have taken	4 11%	26 70%	6 16%	0 0%	1 3%	3
b.	I receive sufficient notice about DCYF in-service training opportunities	7 19%	21 58%	7 19%	1 3%	0 0%	4
c.	DCYF in-service training is conveniently scheduled	4 11%	16 43%	14 38%	2 5%	1 3%	3
d.	DCYF in-service training is easy to get to	4 11%	16 43%	14 38%	2 5%	1 3%	3
e.	DCYF in-service training is high quality	2 6%	16 44%	16 44%	1 3%	1 3%	4
f.	DCYF in-service training makes me a better foster parent	6 16%	19 51%	9 24%	2 5%	1 3%	3
g.	DCYF in-service training is applicable to foster children in my care	3 8%	17 46%	13 35%	3 8%	1 3%	3
h.	I usually prefer to go to DCYF training than to non-DCYF training	0 0%	8 22%	23 64%	2 6%	3 8%	4
i.	I receive sufficient notice about non-DCYF in-service training opportunities.	3 9%	20 57%	9 26%	3 9%	0 0%	5
j.	Non-DCYF in-service training is conveniently scheduled	3 9%	11 31%	19 54%	2 6%	0 0%	5
k.	Non-DCYF in-service training is easy to get to	3 9%	7 21%	20 59%	4 12%	0 0%	6
l.	Non-DCYF in-service training is high quality	4 11%	13 37%	18 51%	0 0%	0 0%	5
m.	Non-DCYF in-service training makes me a better foster parent	4 11%	16 46%	15 43%	0 0%	0 0%	5
n.	Non-DCYF in-service training is applicable to foster children in my care	3 9%	15 43%	17 49%	0 0%	0 0%	5
o.	I usually prefer to go to non-DCYF training than to DCYF training	4 11%	3 9%	25 71%	2 6%	1 3%	5
p.	DCYF should pay for childcare when I attend non-DCYF training	8 22%	9 24%	16 43%	2 5%	2 5%	3
q.	In-service training-related transportation costs should be reimbursed by DCYF	6 16%	8 22%	17 46%	5 14%	1 3%	3
r.	Childcare needs interfere with my ability to attend training	4 11%	13 36%	16 44%	0 0%	3 8%	4
s.	There is an unmet need for distance learning in my area	5 14%	5 14%	25 69%	1 3%	0 0%	4

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Sixteen current DCYF foster parents provided one or more comments:

- **a.**
 - **No training.** 2
 - **I find it ludicrous to leave my six children at home in Salem and drive to Derry for six weeks of training. The system should be geared towards helping foster parents, not impeding their ability to obtain a license by imposing unrealistic requirements.** 1
- **c.**
 - **Difficult to schedule.** 2
 - **Not much training in this area.** 1
- **d.**
 - **Difficult due to distance.** 2
- **e.**
 - **Some DCYF training is good, some are not.** 2
 - **DCYF meetings are “blah.”** 1
 - **Higher quality training outside.** 1
- **i.** **Do not know what this is.** 1
- **j.** 3
 - **Difficult to schedule.**
 - **Do not know what this is.**
 - **Not much training in this area.**
- **k.** 2
 - **Trainings often far from home.**
 - **Do not know what this is.**
- **l.** 5
 - **CLL is a valuable resource.**
 - **SALFAPA meetings are great, foster parents help each other/good topics.**
 - **Some are good, some poor.**
 - **Do not know what this is.**
 - **Higher quality training outside.**
- **m.** **Do not know what this is.** 1
- **n.** **Do not know what this is.** 1
- **o.** 3
 - **No experience with non-DCYF training.**
 - **Do not know what this is.**
 - **Prefer non-DCYF training-more varied and interesting.**
- **p.** 3
 - **If I attend training such as through the hospital, I should cover my own transportation and childcare cost. There are plenty of DCYF and CLL workshops and classes in my area that I can take that childcare cost are covered for.**

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

- o **I feel that you took on the responsibility to have foster children, you should be able to find child care and gas for your car. You should not be doing it for the money, but for our children.**
- o **Just do not agree.**
- **q.** **3**
 - o **You are getting the training so you can pay for yourself getting to the training.**
 - o **Just do not agree.**
 - o **If training is local, DCYF need not reimburse transportation.**
- **r. Child care is an issue.** **3**
37

24. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding support for foster parents:

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	District office foster care licensing workers treat me with respect	11 28%	19 49%	7 18%	1 3%	1 3%	1
b.	Interactions with the foster care licensing worker make me feel I am a valued part of a foster care team	11 30%	13 35%	7 19%	4 11%	2 5%	3
c.	[For CPSW placements] District office child protection social worker (CPSW) caseworkers treat me with respect	5 18%	13 46%	6 21%	3 11%	1 4%	12
d.	[For CPSW placements] Interactions with the district office child protection social worker (CPSW) caseworkers (for CPSW placements) make me feel I am a valued part of a foster care team	4 14%	11 39%	7 25%	4 14%	2 7%	12
e.	[For juvenile services placements] Juvenile services officers caseworkers treat me with respect	2 9%	6 26%	14 61%	1 4%	0 0%	17
f.	[For juvenile services placements] Interactions with the juvenile services officer caseworkers (for juvenile services placements) make me feel I am a valued part of a foster care team	2 8%	6 25%	15 63%	1 4%	0 0%	16
g.	My telephone calls are quickly returned by the foster child's assigned caseworker	1 3%	13 33%	11 28%	11 28%	3 8%	1
h.	If I cannot reach my foster child's assigned caseworker for difficulties that arise during normal business hours, someone at the district office is readily available to help	3 8%	20 53%	6 16%	7 18%	2 5%	2

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
i.	Foster care related help for difficulties that arise after normal business hours (not including weekends) is readily available	2 5%	13 35%	10 27%	6 16%	6 16%	3
j.	Foster care related help for difficulties that arise on the weekends is readily available	2 5%	10 27%	13 35%	6 16%	6 16%	3
k.	State (central) Office staff treat me with respect	6 18%	10 29%	17 50%	1 3%	0 0%	6
l.	Interactions with State (central) Office staff make me feel I am part of a foster care team	5 15%	10 29%	17 50%	1 3%	1 3%	6
m.	I receive foster care payments on a timely basis	8 21%	18 47%	6 16%	4 11%	2 5%	2
n.	I receive a copy of the Case Plan related to foster children in my care	2 5%	12 32%	7 18%	7 18%	10 26%	2
o.	I am involved in the case planning process	1 3%	12 33%	8 22%	4 11%	11 31%	4
p.	The caseworker keeps me informed about what is happening in my foster child's case	2 5%	20 51%	7 18%	5 13%	5 13%	1
q.	I receive a written notice or letter inviting me to the administrative case review (which is usually held at the district office every six months)	5 13%	21 54%	6 15%	4 10%	3 8%	1
r.	I am aware of the circumstances leading to DCYF involvement with my foster child	7 18%	23 59%	4 10%	3 8%	2 5%	1
s.	When I was a new foster parent, it would have helped me to have been mentored by an experienced foster parent	6 16%	18 47%	12 32%	1 3%	1 3%	2

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Twenty-five current DCYF foster parents provided one or more comments:

- **a.**
 - o **Not respected.** 2
 - o **Manchester really needs some changes, not only in personnel but other areas.** 1
 - o **Sometimes.** 1
- **b.** 3
 - o **Sometimes.**
 - o **Workers vary - some include you - some tell you nothing.**

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

- o Foster parents are not part of a team - decisions made without input/input slowly responded to.
- c. 5
 - o Manchester really needs some changes, not only in personnel but other areas.
 - o Not respected.
 - o One caseworker very dishonest.
 - o Caseworker says I have to do what she tells me.
 - o Some.
- d. 3
 - o Workers vary - some include you - some tell you nothing.
 - o Some.
 - o Foster parents are not part of a team - decisions made without input/input slowly responded to.
- e. 3
 - o Manchester really needs some changes, not only in personnel but other areas.
 - o Not respected.
 - o Caseworker says I have to do what she tells me.
- f. 2
 - o Workers vary - some include you - some tell you nothing.
 - o Foster parents are not part of a team - decisions made without input/input slowly responded to.
- g. 5
 - o Caseworker does not return phone calls. 5
 - o Contacted four times in seven months. 1
 - o Only by threatening do I get a response. 1
 - o Some call right back. 1
 - o Caseworkers overtaxed. 1
- h. 3
 - o Contacted four times in seven months.
 - o Office staff connect you to voicemail/unwilling to help.
 - o Go to the supervisor and treated as if you are wrong.
- i. 3
 - o Never available after hours. 3
 - o Only way to reach staff after hours is call police. 1
 - o No help available - wish there was. 1
 - o Call [a specific DCYF worker] at home after hours - if she is out we have no help. 1
- j. 2
 - o Never available on weekends. 2
 - o Only way to reach staff on weekends is call police. 1
 - o No help available - wish there was. 1
 - o Call [a specific DCYF worker] at home on weekends - if she is out we have no help. 1

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

• m.			3
o	Crisis care payments usually take two plus months to arrive.		
o	Never on time.		
o	Sometimes.		
• n.			
o	Never.		7
o	Sometimes.		2
o	Never, probably because I provide respite care.		1
• o.			
o	Never.		4
o	Only at administrative reviews.		1
o	Never, probably because I provide respite care.		1
• p.			
o	Not informed.		3
o	Caseworker does not file paperwork.		1
o	Never, probably because I provide respite care.		1
o	Communication is slow and bureaucratic.		1
• q.			
o	Not invited.		3
o	Usually.		1
o	Received notice but never encouraged to attend.		1
o	Notice is last minute.		1
o	Never, probably because I provide respite care.		1
• r.			
o	Never known the reason for some children.		1
o	Never, probably because I provide respite care.		1
			<u>77</u>

25. On average, approximately how many days after you first leave a message for a foster child’s caseworker do you receive a callback?

a. The same day	12	(32%)	f. Five days later	0	(0%)
b. The following day	14	(37%)	g. Six days later	0	(0%)
c. Two days later	6	(16%)	h. Seven days later	0	(0%)
d. Three days later	1	(3%)	i. More than seven days later	4	(11%)
e. Four days later	1	(3%)			
NR:	2				

Seven current DCYF foster parents commented:

- **Call, call, call until I get someone.**
- **Response requires threatening.**
- **Communication breakdown with NH on an interstate placement.**
- **Sometimes they don’t return my call.**
- **Never.**
- **After two days, usually call back.**
- **Caseworkers differ, range from “same day” to “more than seven days.”**

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

26. On average, the number of times you have to call a foster child’s caseworker in order to get assistance on an issue is:

a. One	8 (21%)	e. Five	0 (0%)
b. Two	16 (42%)	f. Six	0 (0%)
c. Three	9 (24%)	g. Seven	0 (0%)
d. Four	2 (5%)	h. More than seven	3 (8%)
NR:	2		

Four current DCYF foster parents commented:

- **Call the supervisor/go over caseworker’s head.** **2**
- **Heavy interaction with [illegible] to case planning and ongoing issues.** **1**
- **Depends on caseworker.** **1**
- 4**

27. On average, my foster child’s caseworker contacts me (not including in-home visits):

a. Once a week	2 (6%)	e. Once every two months	5 (14%)
b. Once every two weeks	6 (17%)	f. Once every three months	4 (11%)
c. Once every three weeks	2 (6%)	g. Once every six months	2 (6%)
d. Once a month	10 (29%)	h. Less than once every six months	4 (11%)
NR:	5		

Eight current DCYF foster parents commented:

- **Never** **2**
- **Does not contact unless I initiate.** **1**
- **Not applicable for regular crisis care.** **1**
- **Only when I leave several messages.** **1**
- **When court approaches.** **1**
- **Depends on caseworker.** **1**
- **Unless I need assistance sooner.** **1**
- 8**

28. On average, my foster child’s caseworker makes visits to my home to see foster children in my care:

a. Once every month	14 (38%)	e. Once every five months	0 (0%)
b. Once every two months	6 (16%)	f. Once every six months	5 (14%)
c. Once every three months	3 (8%)	g. Once every nine months	1 (3%)
d. Once every four months	2 (5%)	h. Less than once every nine months	6 (16%)
NR:	3		

Eight current DCYF foster parents commented:

- **Never.** **3**
- **Two times in seven months.** **1**
- **Not been to home since last placement.** **1**

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

- **Seen very few workers - ever.** **1**
 - **Children in placement for eight months, caseworker never been here.** **1**
 - **Ranges.** **1**
- 8**

29. About how many times a year have you received a late foster care payment?

- | | | |
|--|-----------|--------------|
| a. Never (<i>please go to question 31</i>) | 11 | (30%) |
| b. One to two times | 15 | (41%) |
| c. Three to four times | 5 | (14%) |
| d. Four to six times | 3 | (8%) |
| e. More than six times | 3 | (8%) |
| NR: | 3 | |

Six current DCYF foster parents commented:

- **Much better than in the past.** **1**
 - **Respite is slow in paying.** **1**
 - **Every time.** **1**
 - **Usually weeks that were skipped by DCYF, for no apparent reason but quickly resolved.** **1**
 - **Supplemental payments, almost every month.** **1**
 - **Never in the last two years.** **1**
- 6**

30. On average, how late are payments?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| a) Three days or less | 2 | (8%) |
| b) Four to six days | 5 | (20%) |
| c) One week to two weeks | 9 | (36%) |
| d) Over two weeks to a month | 7 | (28%) |
| e) Over a month to two months | 1 | (4%) |
| f) Over two months | 1 | (4%) |
| NR: | 15 | |

One current DCYF foster parent commented: Included with next payment.

31. About how many times each year have you received an inaccurate payment?

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| a. None | 25 | (66%) |
| b. One to two times | 9 | (24%) |
| c. Two to three times | 3 | (8%) |
| d. Four to five times | 0 | (0%) |
| e. More than five times | 1 | (3%) |
| NR: | 2 | |

One current DCYF foster parent commented: Usually wrong rate or number of days.

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

32. On average, are payment problems corrected in a timely manner?

- a. Yes **23 (59%)**
- b. No **6 (15%)**
- c. Never had a payment problem **10 (26%)**
- NR: 1**

33. Are you are receiving supplemental foster care payments for any foster children in your care?

- Yes: **9 (24%)**
- No: **29 (76%)**
- NR: 2**

34. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding foster care payments:

1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly Disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	General foster care rates are sufficient	0 0%	12 32%	9 24%	9 24%	8 21%	2
b.	Specialized foster care rates are sufficient	0 0%	8 24%	15 45%	5 15%	5 15%	7
c.	Supplemental foster care rates are sufficient	0 0%	9 28%	16 50%	3 9%	4 13%	8
d.	The foster child clothing allowance is sufficient	0 0%	7 18%	1 3%	13 33%	18 46%	1
e.	The respite care rate is sufficient	3 9%	13 38%	12 35%	2 6%	4 12%	6
f.	The travel reimbursement rate is sufficient	1 3%	6 19%	15 48%	4 13%	5 16%	9
g.	Reimbursement for fire code improvements is sufficient	0 0%	6 18%	18 55%	6 18%	3 9%	7

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Thirty-three current DCYF foster parents provided one or more comments:

- a.
 - o **General rates are low.** **7**
 - o **Rates for teenagers are low.** **3**
 - o **Agree and disagree because I am not trying to make a profit by doing foster care but I would like to break even.** **3**
 - o **Rates for infants are low.** **1**
 - o **You only get what the state wants you to get. If you are a yes person, the sky is the limit. If you disagree to help the child, do not ask for anything.** **1**
 - o **If the rates were too high, they could attract foster parents for the wrong reason!** **1**

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

o	Payments are adequate but not on a par with the cost of living.	1
• b.		3
o	Handicap children need 24 hours, on eye supervision, some of the children I received, I wish you had one day and you'll understand.	
o	Children come with nothing except head lice. We have to get out and get a new wardrobe - babies need diapers which are expensive. At the end of the month, you make very little.	
o	Agree and disagree because I am not trying to make a profit by doing foster care but I'd like to break even.	
• d.		
o	Rates inadequate.	17
o	Agree and disagree because I am not trying to make a profit by doing foster care but I would like to break even.	1
• e.	Rate is insufficient.	2
• f.		
o	What travel reimbursement?	2
o	Travel reimbursements adequate/paperwork difficult.	1
o	Never received travel reimbursement.	1
• g.		
o	What fire reimbursement?	4
o	Never received fire code improvement reimbursement.	2
		<u>50</u>

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please use the space below for any additional comments.

Eight current DCYF foster parents provided additional comments:

- Workers on all levels in Manchester have been here a long time and have gotten lazy or act like drill sergeants. They do not like to give info on children that hinders placement. It's a "pass the buck system." New people are not taught anything. Some workers have their favorite foster parents.
- Timely payments have improved a lot since 1990, at one time they were between four and six weeks late. I like the two-week system. Social workers also improve - as far as visiting the house more regularly.
- I would much rather deal with NH than Massachusetts any day! Massachusetts just does not seem to care once the child is placed.
- The current staff of caseworkers is insufficient to meet the caseloads they have. The whole system would work more smoothly and the children would be better served by a less overburdened staff of workers.
- I feel I should not fill this out until Manchester office gets rid of their idiots working there.
- When caseworkers are not being fair with the foster parents, the foster parents have no one neutral to listen to the situation. The caseworker pulls

Appendix A – Survey of Current DCYF Foster Parents (continued)

the children out after lying to the foster parents. I hope someone will listen to me and help out foster parents.

- My experience has shown me that issues are not dealt with in a timely manner. Everything is crisis driven rather than pro-active which for many (perhaps most) children creates additional problems. Although we have the care for these children 24/7, we do not have either legal rights or respect to match. This is especially critical with long-term placements. We need to be included in making plans and court hearings. We know the most about these kids!**
- I would like to try foster care again. My first and last one was very difficult but I loved the children and I hope they are doing well.**

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APPENDIX B

SURVEY OF CURRENT CHILD PLACING AGENCY FOSTER PARENTS

NOTES:

- Responses are in bold.
 - Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
 - Twenty-eight of 49 (57 percent) current child placing agency foster parents surveyed responded.
 - NR = No Response.
-

1. I have been a licensed foster parent for ____ years.

Average: 4.2 years
Range: from 0.5 to 16 years

2. I have been a permitted foster parent for ____ years.

Average: 4 years
Range: from 0.5 to 8 years
NR: 21

3. Since becoming a foster parent, I have cared for _____ (number) foster children, not including respite care.

Average: 3.5 children
Range: from 0 to 20 children
NR: 2

One current child placing agency foster parent commented: Respite only so far.

4. Please put a ✓ next to the one answer that best describes your current licensing or permitting status:

a)	I am currently <u>licensed</u> as a foster family parent through a private agency.	27	(96%)
b)	I am currently <u>permitted</u> as a foster family parent through a private agency.	1	(4%)
c)	I <u>no longer</u> am a private agency foster family parent.	0	(0%)

One current child placing agency foster parent commented: However, our license expired and although I did everything needed - we have not received our renewed license yet.

**Appendix B - Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

5. Please indicate for which of the following you currently are licensed or permitted:
(Please put a ✓ for all appropriate responses.)

		Licensed	Permitted
a)	General foster family care provider	21	0
b)	Specialized foster family care provider	5	0
c)	Therapeutic foster family care provider	14	0
d)	Emergency foster care provider	4	0
e)	Assessment foster care provider	3	0
f)	Delinquent child foster family care provider	3	0
g)	CHINS (child in need of services) foster family care provider	5	0

6. Please indicate if you fall within any of the following categories:

Category	Yes	No
a) Crisis foster care provider	4 (36%)	7 (64%)
b) PIC (provisional interim care) provider	2 (18%)	9 (82%)
c) Respite care foster family care provider	18 (82%)	4 (18%)

If you hold, or have ever held, a private agency foster care permit (not a foster care license), please answer question 7.

7. a) Has your foster home permit ever been extended by the agency past its expiration date?

No (please go to question 8)	6	(100%)
Yes (please continue with parts 7b and 7c below)	0	(0%)
NR:	22	

b) For how many weeks has it been extended?

c) Why has it been extended? _____

8. Please rate the foster family parent licensing process.

a. Very simple	4 (14%)	c. Fairly complicated	7 (25%)
b. Fairly simple	16 (57%)	d. Very complicated	1 (4%)

If you rated the process either c. (fairly complicated) or d. (very complicated), please explain your rating in the space below.

Seven current child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **Our situation does not change yet we need to do almost as much to renew as for the first time and although I get the information in on time, it is always long past the expiration before we get a renewed license.**
- **The fire inspections have varied.**

**Appendix B - Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

- **Seemed like when we thought everything was done, there was one more piece of paperwork to do.**
- **The many steps and the many people to get approval from is time consuming and frustrating.**
- **Very personal, timely, thorough, much paperwork to fill out, send out and thorough investigation and health and hazard restrictions and requirements.**
- **Six week course/lots of paperwork/fire inspection/well test/compliance officer inspection/home case study.**
- **Several hours of training, have home inspected and brought to standards.**

9. a) Have you ever had any foster child remain in placement with you even though your foster home license was not renewed by its expiration date?

No <i>(please go to question 10)</i>	28	(100%)
Yes <i>(please continue with parts 9b and 9c below)</i>	0	(0%)

One current child placing agency foster parent commented: Only because we've been lucky not to have a foster child then.

b) What was the longest amount of time any child was in placement with you while your license was expired? ____ weeks

c) Please list below the reason(s) why the relicensing was not completed by the foster home license expiration date:

**Appendix B - Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

10. Through which one of the following private agencies are you a foster family home?

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. Adoptive Families for Children
0 (0%) | i. LDS Social Services
0 (0%) |
| b. Bethany Christian Services
0 (0%) | j. Lutheran Social Services of NE
1 (4%) |
| c. Boston Adoption Bureau
0 (0%) | k. NH Catholic Charities
1 (4%) |
| d. Casey Family Services
15 (54%) | l. New Hope Christian Services
0 (0%) |
| e. Child and Family Services of NH
0 (0%) | m. North American Family Institute
(NFI) North
2 (7%) |
| f. Creative Advocates for Children
and Families
0 (0%) | n. Vermont Children's Aid Society
0 (0%) |
| g. Easter Seal Society
9 (32%) | o. Wide Horizons for Children
0 (0%) |
| h. Greater Laconia Community
Services
0 (0%) | p. Other (<i>please specify</i>):
0 (0%) |

11. How many foster children is your home authorized to accept?

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| a) None 0 (0%) | d) Three 3 (11%) | g) Six 0 (0%) |
| b) One 10 (36%) | e) Four 0 (0%) | |
| c) Two 14 (50%) | f) Five 1 (4%) | |

12. How many foster children are currently placed in your home?

- | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a) None 8 (29%) | d) Three 1 (4%) | g) Six 0 (0%) |
| b) One 18 (64%) | e) Four 0 (0%) | h) More than six 0 (0%) |
| c) Two 1 (4%) | f) Five 0 (0%) | |

One current child placing agency foster parent commented: We have one child who just finished her junior year at Keene State College. She only comes home on holidays! She is 21 years old and doing very well.

13. Are you interested in increasing the number of foster children in your home?

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| a) No (<i>Please go to question 14</i>) | 20 (74%) |
| b) Yes (<i>If you answered yes, please explain in the space below.</i>) | 7 (26%) |
| NR: | 1 |

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

Eight current child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **Can handle more children.** **5**
 - **After completion of the adoption process for current foster child.** **1**
 - **More frequent placements.** **1**
 - **Now a treatment-level long-term home.** **1**
- 8**

14. Are you a child-specific foster family care provider, that is, are you a foster home only for one or more specific children?

Yes **9 (32%)**
 No **19 (68%)**
 NR: **0**

15. Approximately how long after you were licensed or permitted was a foster child placed in your home? (*Place a ✓ next to the answer that applies to you: one ✓ for permitted, and one ✓ for licensed.*)

<u>Permitted</u>		<u>Time</u>	<u>Licensed</u>	
a.	1	Child was already living in my home	j.	5
b.	2	Less than one week	k.	6
c.	1	One to two weeks	l.	1
d.	0	Two weeks to one month	m.	5
e.	2	One to two months	n.	2
f.	1	Two to six months	o.	3
g.	0	Seven to 12 months	p.	1
h.	0	Over 12 months	q.	0
i.	0	No child has been placed with me yet	r.	0

16. Please rate the effectiveness of each of the following items in recruiting you as a foster parent. (*Please put a ✓ for each question.*)

		1 = Very effective		2 = Effective		3 = Neither effective nor ineffective		4 = Ineffective		5 = Very ineffective		
		1	2	3	4	5	NR					
a.	Agency television, radio or newspaper announcement	6 25%	8 33%	10 42%	0 0%	0 0%	4					
b.	Agency foster family parent	5 24%	7 33%	8 38%	0 0%	1 5%	7					
c.	Agency recruitment event	2 11%	5 26%	10 53%	0 0%	2 11%	9					
d.	A religious organization	0 0%	2 11%	13 68%	1 5%	3 16%	9					
e.	A school	0 0%	1 6%	13 72%	1 6%	3 17%	10					
f.	A foster child	2 11%	6 33%	9 50%	0 0%	1 6%	10					

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

1 = Very effective 4 = Ineffective		2 = Effective 5 = Very ineffective		3 = Neither effective nor ineffective			
		1	2	3	4	5	NR
g.	Having been a foster child	1 6%	1 6%	11 69%	0 0%	3 19%	12
h.	Other (<i>please specify</i>): Six comments:						
	• Friend. (2)	3	1	0	0	1	
	• Self motivated. (2)	60%	20%	0%	0%	20%	
	• Newspaper article.						
	• Referred by DCYF.						

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (ineffective) or 5 (very ineffective), please explain your rating(s) below:

Six current child placing agency foster parents provided one or more comments:

- **b. Not part of our decision.** **1**
- **c. Not part of our decision.** **1**
- **d.** **2**
 - o **Not part of our decision.**
 - o **Never participated in a religious organization.**
- **e. I would think of school for education, not family needs.** **1**
- **g.** **2**
 - o **Not part of our decision.**
 - o **Never was a foster child.**
- **h.** **3**
 - o **A friend that is a foster parent.**
 - o **Desire to foster a child and research for a supportive agency.**
 - o **There was no recruiting. I read an article and a few years later I approached agencies I thought would have this kind of foster care.**__

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

17. Please indicate your satisfaction with the overall agency foster family parent recruitment efforts:

a. Very satisfactory	12	(44%)
b. Satisfactory	13	(48%)
c. Neither satisfactory nor unsatisfactory	1	(4%)
d. Unsatisfactory	0	(0%)
e. Very unsatisfactory	1	(4%)
NR:	1	

*If you responded **d.** (unsatisfactory) or **e.** (very unsatisfactory), please explain your response:*

Two current child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **No recruiting, I read an article and a few years later I approached agencies that I thought would have this kind of foster care.**
- **They were excellent. Cannot think of any improvements.**

18. How could the agency improve its foster parent recruitment efforts?

Seventeen current child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **Talk to community-based organizations.** 5
 - **They do a good job.** 5
 - **More advertising.** 2
 - **Do not need to recruit/do not have enough children for the foster families they have.** 1
 - **Present specific children needing homes.** 1
 - **Not having to fight to have a specific child that you are interested in come live with us.** 1
 - **This may sound harsh but the Humane Society does a better PR job to push animal adoptions.** 1
 - **Spending a little more time with the soon to be foster parents. In the interview find out about them.** 1
- 1
17

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

21. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	I am <u>never</u> pressured to accept a foster child placement.	8 29%	18 64%	2 7%	0 0%	0 0%	0
b.	The agency always provides a complete description about a child placed with me.	6 22%	15 56%	3 11%	3 11%	0 0%	1
c.	The agency always provides sufficient notice before a foster child is placed with me.	5 19%	15 56%	6 22%	1 4%	0 0%	1
d.	Children placed with me are always the requested gender.	5 19%	12 44%	8 30%	2 7%	0 0%	1
e.	Children placed with me are always the requested age group.	4 15%	14 52%	6 22%	3 11%	0 0%	1
f.	School-aged children placed with me come from the school district I live in.	1 4%	0 0%	13 50%	9 35%	3 12%	2
g.	The children placed with me come from the town I live in.	1 4%	2 7%	10 37%	10 37%	4 15%	1
h.	The needs of each child placed with me are always well matched with what I can provide as a foster parent.	7 26%	14 52%	4 15%	2 7%	0 0%	1
i.	I am an appropriate placement for a child with serious health issues.	4 15%	4 15%	7 26%	9 33%	3 11%	1
j.	I am an appropriate placement for a child with serious emotional handicaps.	4 15%	10 37%	6 22%	5 19%	2 7%	1
k.	I am an appropriate placement for a sexually abused child.	5 19%	10 37%	7 26%	2 7%	3 11%	1
l.	I am an appropriate placement for a mentally retarded child.	2 7%	8 30%	11 41%	2 7%	4 15%	1
m.	I am an appropriate placement for a male teen child.	4 15%	13 48%	7 26%	2 7%	1 4%	1
n.	I am an appropriate placement for a female teen child.	2 7%	12 44%	8 30%	3 11%	2 7%	1
o.	I am an appropriate placement for a juvenile delinquent child.	2 7%	6 22%	12 44%	4 15%	3 11%	1
p.	I am an appropriate placement for a CHINS (child in need of services) child.	2 7%	12 44%	11 41%	2 7%	0 0%	1

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Twenty current child placing agency foster parents provided one or more comments:

- **b.**
 - o **All particulars are not disclosed – probably because they don’t know.** **3**
 - o **Physical, emotional?** **1**

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

- **c.** **3**
 - **Two general care kids were rushed into our home, one because she was blowing out of a therapeutic home.**
 - **The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.**
 - **The agency provided us with information, support, finances, and any resources emotionally and physically needed.**
- **d.** **1**
 - **The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.**
- **e.** **2**
 - **The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.**
 - **We had wanted a younger child – we were approached with an older child and had the opportunity to decide.**
- **f.**
 - **Most of the children are not from my school district.** **7**
 - **Child was preschool at placement.** **1**
 - **The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.** **1**
- **g.**
 - **Children came from different towns.** **7**
 - **The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.** **1**
- **h.** **4**
 - **I believe it’s more important to DCYF to place a child than to make a match.**
 - **The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.**
 - **The agency helps me to provide the knowledge and strength to meet the need of the child.**
 - **Before ASFA, my husband and I could not meet certain kids needs because the parents were allowed too much say in everyday matters and behavior matters.**
- **i.**
 - **Not suitable.** **6**
 - **The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.** **1**
- **j.**
 - **Not suitable.** **3**
 - **The foster care that I do is strictly for newborns whose mothers are placing them for adoption.** **1**
 - **The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.** **1**

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

- **k.** **3**
 - I don't want a child that has serious problems right now.
 - I cannot keep other children in the house safe. Other children in home.
 - The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.
- **l.**
 - Not suitable. **4**
 - I'd be appropriate for a mentally retarded child only if I could get a lot of respite. **1**
 - The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement. **1**
- **m.** **3**
 - The foster care that I do is strictly for newborns whose mothers are placing them for adoption.
 - Not qualified.
 - The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.
- **n.**
 - Not suitable, only boys live at home. **2**
 - For personal family reasons. **1**
 - The foster care that I do is strictly for newborns whose mothers are placing them for adoption. **1**
 - Don't feel qualified, trained - there are other like-aged children in the home presenting safety issues. **1**
 - The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement. **1**
- **o.** **3**
 - Not suitable.
 - The foster care that I do is strictly for newborns whose mothers are placing them for adoption.
 - The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.
- **p.** **3**
 - Not suitable.
 - The foster care that I do is strictly for newborns whose mothers are placing them for adoption.
 - The above are N/A because we have had one child placed with us for long-term placement.

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**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

22. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about pre-service training:

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree							
My pre-service training provided me sufficient understanding of:		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	My role as a foster parent	10 37%	14 52%	3 11%	0 0%	0 0%	1
b.	The realities of foster parenting	8 30%	16 59%	0 0%	3 11%	0 0%	1
c.	My expected relationship with a foster child's parent(s)	6 22%	14 52%	4 15%	2 7%	1 4%	1
d.	Payment rates to foster parents	9 33%	15 56%	2 7%	1 4%	0 0%	1
e.	How to fill out payment forms	6 22%	13 48%	6 22%	2 7%	0 0%	1
f.	Ways to contact the agency after hours including weekends	11 41%	12 44%	1 4%	1 4%	2 7%	1
g.	Information to be reported to the agency	10 37%	15 56%	0 0%	2 7%	0 0%	1
h.	Services provided by the agency	9 33%	12 44%	2 7%	3 11%	1 4%	1
i.	Discipline of foster children	10 37%	14 52%	3 11%	0 0%	0 0%	1
j.	Foster parent training requirements	11 41%	15 56%	1 4%	0 0%	0 0%	1
k.	Foster parent training availability	11 41%	13 48%	3 11%	0 0%	0 0%	1
l.	Agency policies on foster parent abuse/neglect	9 33%	16 59%	2 7%	0 0%	0 0%	1
m.	Foster care legal aspects	8 30%	12 44%	5 19%	1 4%	1 4%	1
n.	Respite care policy	11 41%	13 48%	1 4%	1 4%	1 4%	1
o.	Transportation reimbursement policy	7 26%	11 41%	6 22%	1 4%	2 7%	1
p.	Working with a handicapped child	3 11%	12 44%	7 26%	4 15%	1 4%	1
q.	Working with a sexually abused child	5 19%	14 52%	4 15%	4 15%	0 0%	1
r.	Working with a child culturally different	3 11%	13 48%	7 26%	2 7%	2 7%	1
s.	Working with a child racially different	3 11%	13 48%	7 26%	2 7%	2 7%	1
t.	Working with a child of a different religion	3 11%	13 48%	9 33%	1 4%	1 4%	1

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree							
My pre-service training provided me sufficient understanding of:		1	2	3	4	5	NR
u.	Working with a juvenile delinquent	3 11%	14 52%	6 22%	2 7%	2 7%	1
v.	Pre-service trainers were able to fully answer my questions.	8 31%	12 46%	5 19%	1 4%	0 0%	2
w.	Pre-service training scheduling was convenient for me.	8 31%	12 46%	2 8%	3 12%	1 4%	2
x.	During training, experienced foster parents exposed me to the realities of foster parenting.	10 38%	10 38%	4 15%	0 0%	2 8%	2

y. Please indicate here if your pre-service training was conducted by a private licensing agency:

Yes, by private agency **16 (64%)**
 No, not by private agency **9 (36%)**
 NR: **3**

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your ratings below.

Eleven current child placing agency foster parents provided one or more comments:

- **b.**
 - o **There really is no way to understand the realities without having been there.** 2
 - o **DCYF is more concerned with placing the children into care than with teaching prospective foster parents about parenting. Our pre-service training did not include information on many of the statements above.** 1
- **c. There really is no way to understand the realities without having been there.** 1
- **d. I believe training by a private agency would be much more honest and prepare the parent much better than what I received. My training through DCYF was terrible. I never knew for four years that my child had a Medicaid card for prescriptions - I paid for them all, nobody explained what it covered.** 1
- **f. We were told if a child ran away to call the police: that's all the info I got on after hours.** 1
- **n. Not offered respite for ten or 12 years/was afraid to ask.** 2
- **o. I never got transportation reimbursement. Nobody told us it was available.** 3
- **q. They covered up the fact that my foster children were sexually abused until I told them.** 1

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

- r. Not being prepared for that type of foster child. 1
 - s. Not being prepared for that type of foster child. 1
 - t. Not being prepared for that type of foster child. 1
 - u. Not being prepared for that type of foster child. 1
 - w. Having children of my own, sometimes it was hard to find someone to take care of them. 1

 - x. During training, we had one foster mother to listen to and ask question, very briefly. 1
 - y. Training by public and private agencies. 3
- 21**

23. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about in-service training:

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	I am satisfied with in-service training I have taken	10 38%	11 42%	5 19%	0 0%	0 0%	2
b.	I receive sufficient notice about DCYF (Division of Children, Youth, and Families) sponsored in-service training opportunities	8 31%	13 50%	2 8%	2 8%	1 4%	2
c.	DCYF sponsored in-service training is conveniently scheduled	4 15%	11 42%	10 38%	1 4%	0 0%	2
d.	DCYF sponsored in-service training is easy to get to	4 15%	11 42%	11 42%	0 0%	0 0%	2
e.	DCYF sponsored in-service training is high quality	5 19%	8 31%	13 50%	0 0%	0 0%	2
f.	DCYF sponsored in-service training makes me a better foster parent	5 19%	10 38%	10 38%	1 4%	0 0%	2
g.	DCYF sponsored in-service training is applicable to foster children in my care	6 23%	9 35%	8 31%	3 12%	0 0%	2
h.	I usually prefer to go to DCYF sponsored training than to non-DCYF sponsored training	0 0%	3 12%	18 69%	2 8%	3 12%	2
i.	I receive sufficient notice about private agency in-service training opportunities.	11 39%	13 46%	3 11%	1 4%	0 0%	0
j.	Private agency in-service training is conveniently scheduled	6 21%	14 50%	6 21%	2 7%	0 0%	0
k.	Private agency in-service training is easy to get to	8 29%	16 57%	4 14%	0 0%	0 0%	0
l.	Private agency in-service training is high quality	12 43%	11 39%	4 14%	1 4%	0 0%	0
m.	Private agency in-service training makes me a better foster parent	11 39%	13 46%	4 14%	0 0%	0 0%	0
n.	Private agency in-service training is applicable to foster children in my care	12 43%	9 32%	7 25%	0 0%	0 0%	0

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
o.	I usually prefer to go to private agency training than to DCYF-sponsored training	5 18%	7 25%	15 54%	0 0%	1 4%	0
p.	The private agency should pay for childcare when I attend non-agency training	5 18%	10 36%	12 43%	1 4%	0 0%	0
q.	In-service training-related transportation costs should be reimbursed by the private agency	5 19%	12 44%	9 33%	1 4%	0 0%	1
r.	Childcare needs interfere with my ability to attend training	2 7%	8 29%	11 39%	6 21%	1 4%	0
s.	There is an unmet need for distance learning in my area	3 12%	6 24%	15 60%	1 4%	0 0%	3

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Seven current child placing agency foster parents provided one or more comments:

- **b.** **3**
 - o **Having been with a private agency for seven years, we have never received any notices from DCYF**
 - o **Sometimes bulletins come the day of training.**
 - o **Our training is through the agency and rarely hear about in-service training at DCYF.**
- **f. DCYF training has nothing to do with my situation.** **1**
- **h.**
 - o **Private agency training usually has better facilities, amenities, and planning.** **1**
 - o **We like to work with people we know.** **1**
- **i. Sometimes bulletins come the day of training.** **1**
- **o. I prefer College for Lifelong Learning classes or other trainings in my community. Sometimes our agency trainings are good, sometimes they're not.** **1**
- **p. If you choose to be a foster parent, you have the responsibility to get training and expect to shoulder some of the costs.** **1**
- **q. If you choose to be a foster parent, you have the responsibility to get training and expect to shoulder some of the costs.** **1**
- **r.** **2**
 - o **We will swap in order to go to training.**
 - o **The agency provides childcare so I'm able to attend trainings.**

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**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

24. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding support for foster parents:

		1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree					
		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	Private agency foster care licensing workers treat me with respect	18 64%	9 32%	0 0%	1 4%	0 0%	0
b.	Interactions with the private agency foster care licensing worker make me feel I am a valued part of a foster care team	19 68%	8 29%	1 4%	0 0%	0 0%	0
c.	Private agency foster child caseworkers treat me with respect	19 68%	9 32%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0
d.	Interactions with private agency foster child caseworkers make me feel I am a valued part of a foster care team	19 68%	8 29%	1 4%	0 0%	0 0%	0
e.							
f.							
g.	My telephone calls are quickly returned by the foster child's assigned caseworker	15 54%	9 32%	4 14%	0 0%	0 0%	0
h.	If I cannot reach my foster child's assigned caseworker for difficulties that arise during normal business hours, someone at the private agency is readily available to help	15 54%	8 29%	4 14%	0 0%	1 4%	0
i.	Foster care related help for difficulties that arise after normal business hours (not including weekends) is readily available	16 57%	8 29%	4 14%	0 0%	0 0%	0
j.	Foster care related help for difficulties that arise on the weekends is readily available	15 54%	10 36%	3 11%	0 0%	0 0%	0
k.	I am respected by private agency (central) office staff	13 46%	14 50%	1 4%	0 0%	0 0%	0
l.	Interactions with private agency (central) office staff make me feel I am part of a foster care team	15 54%	10 36%	3 11%	0 0%	0 0%	0
m.	I receive foster care payments on a timely basis	18 64%	8 29%	1 4%	1 4%	0 0%	0
n.	I receive a copy of the Case Plan related to foster children in my care	15 54%	8 29%	4 14%	0 0%	1 4%	0
o.	I am involved in the case planning process	12 43%	9 32%	7 25%	0 0%	0 0%	0
p.	The caseworker keeps me informed about what is happening in my foster child's case	12 44%	12 44%	2 7%	0 0%	1 4%	1
q.	I receive a written notice or letter inviting me to the administrative case review (which is usually held at the office every six months)	13 48%	9 33%	5 19%	0 0%	0 0%	1

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
r.	I am aware of the circumstances leading to private agency involvement with my foster child	11 39%	15 54%	2 7%	0 0%	0 0%	0
s.	When I was a new foster parent, it would have helped me to have been mentored by an experienced foster parent	5 18%	8 29%	13 46%	1 4%	1 4%	0

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Six current child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **g. I always had call back right away from agency case managers. DCYF case manager I wouldn't hear back sometimes for two to three weeks.** **1**
 - **m. On several occasions they have been five to six days late.** **1**
 - **n. Never received a case plan for our foster child/the caseworker either is not sure or has not heard regarding the question I am asking. We feel like we are very much on our own. DCYF case-worker did not even show up for administrative case review. Have never met the person.** **1**
 - **s.** **2**
 - o **I was able to talk to a parent who had been doing this.**
 - o **Needed more education to adequately deal with the needs of the child.**
 - **Other. All these answers pertain to the agency.** **1**
- 6**

25. On average, approximately how many days after you first leave a message for a foster child's caseworker do you receive a callback?

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| a) The same day | 22 (81%) | f) Five days later | 0 (0%) |
| b) The following day | 5 (19%) | g) Six days later | 0 (0%) |
| c) Two days later | 0 (0%) | h) Seven days later | 0 (0%) |
| d) Three days later | 0 (0%) | i) More than seven days later | 0 (0%) |
| e) Four days later | 0 (0%) | | |
| NR: | 1 | | |

Two current child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **We have one agency caseworker and one from DCYF.**
- **I assume this pertains to the DCYF worker.**

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

26. On average, the number of times you have to call a foster child’s caseworker in order to get assistance on an issue is:

a) One	23 (85%)	e) Five	0 (0%)
b) Two	2 (7%)	f) Six	0 (0%)
c) Three	2 (7%)	g) Seven	0 (0%)
d) Four	0 (0%)	h) More than seven	0 (0%)
NR:	1		

One current child placing agency foster parent commented: I assume this pertains to the DCYF worker.

27. On average, my foster child’s caseworker contacts me (not including in-home visits):

a) Once a week	14 (56%)	e) Once every two months	0 (0%)
b) Once every two weeks	6 (24%)	f) Once every three months	1 (4%)
c) Once every three weeks	2 (8%)	g) Once every six months	0 (0%)
d) Once a month	1 (4%)	h) Less than once every six months	1 (4%)
NR:	3		

Five current child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **When respite is needed.**
- **Agency caseworker more frequently! DCYF worker – every six months.**
- **Less, two to three times.**
- **I assume this pertains to the DCYF worker.**
- **Foster child is a senior in college and only comes home on holidays.**

28. On average, my foster child’s caseworker makes visits to my home to see foster children in my care:

a) Once every month	18 (75%)	e) Once every five months	0 (0%)
b) Once every two months	2 (8%)	f) Once every six months	0 (0%)
c) Once every three months	2 (8%)	g) Once every nine months	0 (0%)
d) Once every four months	0 (0%)	h) Less than once every nine months	2 (8%)
NR:	4		

Eleven current child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **Once every week.** **4**
 - **Every two weeks.** **1**
 - **One time plus per week.** **1**
 - **Only to transport to visits to bio-family.** **1**
 - **Agency - weekly. DCYF - once every five months.** **1**
 - **Twice a month or more.** **1**
 - **I assume this pertains to the DCYF worker.** **1**
 - **When they were with us full time, our social worker was there when we needed her!** **1**
- 11**

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

29. About how many times a year have you received a late foster care payment?

a) Never (<i>please go to question 31</i>)	20	(74%)
b) One to two times	5	(19%)
c) Three to four times	1	(4%)
d) Four to six times	0	(0%)
e) More than six times	1	(4%)
NR:	1	

Two current child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **Payments are made through the agency.**
- **I assume this pertains to the DCYF worker.**

30. On average, how late are payments?

a) Three days or less	5	(71%)
b) Four to six days	1	(14%)
c) One week to two weeks	1	(14%)
d) Over two weeks to a month	0	(0%)
e) Over a month to two months	0	(0%)
f) Over two month	0	(0%)
NR:	21	

One current child placing foster parent commented: Payments are made through the agency.

31. About how many times each year have you received an inaccurate payment?

a) None	20	(74%)
b) One to two times	7	(26%)
c) Two to three times	0	(0%)
d) Four to five times	0	(0%)
e) More than five times	0	(0%)
NR:	1	

32. On average, are payment problems corrected in a timely manner?

a) yes	13	(54%)
b) no	0	(0%)
c) never had a payment problem	11	(46%)
NR:	4	

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

33. Are you are receiving supplemental foster care payments for any foster children in your care?

Yes **6** **(26%)**
 No **17** **(74%)**
 NR: **5**

Two current child placing foster parents commented: Not sure what this means.

34. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding foster care payments:

		1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree					
		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	General foster care rates are sufficient	1 4%	7 28%	6 24%	3 12%	8 32%	3
b.	Specialized foster care rates are sufficient	1 4%	9 36%	9 36%	3 12%	3 12%	3
c.	Supplemental foster care rates are sufficient	1 5%	4 18%	13 59%	2 9%	2 9%	6
d.	The foster child clothing allowance is sufficient	3 13%	6 25%	6 25%	3 13%	6 25%	4
e.	The respite care rate is sufficient	4 16%	11 44%	7 28%	1 4%	2 8%	3
f.	The travel reimbursement rate is sufficient	3 12%	5 20%	9 36%	5 20%	3 12%	3
g.	Reimbursement for fire code improvements is sufficient	2 8%	4 15%	13 50%	2 8%	5 19%	2
h.	The therapeutic foster care rate is sufficient	3 13%	7 30%	10 43%	2 9%	1 4%	5

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Eighteen current child placing agency foster parents provided one or more comments:

- a.
 - o Not sufficient. 4
 - o Foster care is not valued in this state. Children should be well cared for and loved and those who take on that role should be fairly compensated. 1
 - o Unfamiliar with other than agency rates, which are sufficient. 1
 - o Rates are sufficient for child’s care but I have taken myself out of the workforce for an unlimited amount of time receiving no individual health insurance and social security. 1

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

o Rates are sufficient for child’s care but the rates provided to the foster parents are definitely insufficient for the service provided.	1
o DCYF reimbursement was not sufficient but private agency is definitely more than fair with their payment reimbursement.	1
o I believe all these kids need a full-time foster parent and the only way to accomplish that is to pay the foster parent enough so they can stay home and be there for the child.	1
• d.	
o Not sufficient.	3
o DCYF rate not sufficient, agency rate sufficient.	1
• f.	
o Never paid a travel reimbursement.	4
o Insufficient due to the increase in gas prices.	2
• g.	
o Never reimbursed for fire code costs.	5
o Not even aware of reimbursement for fire code costs.	2
o If a home needs to be brought up to fire and safety codes, this would tell me that it is not safe for the family already. Why should DCYF have to pay for bringing someone’s home up to code?	1
o We had to pay half the cost for fire improvements for foster children when I would not need those improvements to have my own family live here.	1
• Other. I advocate highly for a group insurance to be offered to foster parents and also a means of a retirement fund.	<u>1</u>
	30

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please use the space below for any additional comments.

Nine current child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **State workers are underpaid and overworked. It’s only a private agency that can afford to pay a more equitable stipend for clothing, sports, camp and foster parents. Their workers are more highly paid and have a lower case load making the whole process more enjoyable and accomplishing much more.**
- **Unless the question was specifically for DCYF, my answers were based on a private agency.**
- **Foster children today have enough attachment disorders to qualify as treatment children. If you want more foster parents to work with these kids, you need to pay them. If a child goes to a residential facility, you can pay \$100,000 per year but a foster parent gets \$7,200 per year and pays for clothes, shoes, etc. in order for the child to fit in. This is why we are with a private agency.**
- **We have two caseworkers: one with the agency and one with DCYF.**

**Appendix B – Survey Of Current Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

- **Payments are made through the agency.**
- **The needs of the child placed with us were not fully known to the agency or us. Social workers changed at least three times within the year. Feel more input from experienced foster parents would have helped and also some training or classes for our biological children would have helped in knowing what to expect having a new child in their home. Also needed is some training for schools and teachers explaining foster care and the need for confidentiality within our schools.**
- **I advocate highly for group insurance to be offered to foster parents and also a retirement fund.**
- **I have been very pleased with therapeutic foster care with the agency.**
- **The agency is a wonderful organization. We have had a very good relationship with them. We have been with them since 1993.**

APPENDIX C

SURVEY OF FORMER DCYF FOSTER PARENTS

NOTES:

- **Responses are in bold.**
- **Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.**
- **Thirty-five of 63 (56 percent) of the former DCYF foster parents surveyed responded.**
- **NR = No response.**

1. Why did you decide to stop being a DCYF foster parent?

<i>(please check Yes or No for each item)</i>	Yes	No	NR
a. Age – felt too old to care for foster children	3 10%	27 90%	5
b. Marital problems (divorce, separation, etc.)	4 13%	26 87%	5
c. Health problems	5 16%	26 84%	4
d. Moved/relocated	6 20%	24 80%	5
e. Conflict between foster child and my own or adopted child	1 3%	29 97%	5
f. Expect to have my own child or more of my own children	2 7%	28 93%	5
g. Adopted foster child	4 13%	27 87%	4
h. Adopted a different child	0 0%	30 100%	5
i. Could not get type of child requested	2 7%	28 93%	5
j. Poor communications with child protective social worker caseworker(s)	11 34%	21 66%	3
k. Poor communications with juvenile services worker caseworker(s)	7 23%	23 77%	5
l. Poor communications with foster care licensing worker	4 13%	27 87%	4
m. Lack of support from foster child's child protection service worker(s)	10 32%	21 68%	4
n. Lack of support from the foster child's juvenile service worker(s)	6 20%	24 80%	5
o. Lack of respite services	7 23%	23 77%	5
p. Lack of day care	3 10%	28 90%	4

Appendix C – Survey Of Former DCYF Foster Parents (Continued)

<i>(please check Yes or No for each item)</i>	Yes	No	NR
q. Lack of other services <i>(please specify)</i> : Five comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation not large enough. • Very unorganized. • Lack of weekend help. • Behaviors between foster children not appropriate; social worker not interested in helping children. • Not enough follow-up when children return home. 	6 19%	25 81%	4
r. Problems with foster child's parents	2 6%	29 94%	4
s. Health care needs of foster child too difficult to manage	2 6%	29 94%	4
t. Emotional needs of foster child too difficult to manage	6 19%	25 81%	4
v. Behavior of foster child too difficult to manage	10 32%	21 68%	4
w. Had difficulty seeing foster child leave	6 19%	25 81%	4
x. Inadequate foster care reimbursements	9 29%	22 71%	4
y. Foster care payments not timely	8 27%	22 73%	5
z. I was a child-specific foster family care provider (that is, I was a foster home only for one or more specific children), so I stopped being a foster parent when there was no longer a need for care for the foster child(ren)	9 29%	22 71%	4
aa. Became a private child-placing agency foster family care provider	3 9%	29 91%	3
bb. I could no longer meet my community's fire and safety requirements	0 0%	31 100%	4
cc. I could no longer acquire sufficient in-service training hours	1 3%	30 97%	4

Appendix C – Survey Of Former DCYF Foster Parents (Continued)

<i>(please check Yes or No for each item)</i>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>NR</u>
dd. Other reason for not continuing to be a foster parent <i>(please specify)</i> : Thirteen comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many problems with case manager, miscommunication and lack of understanding. • Child did not want to be with us anymore. • Total lack of respect from entire system. • DCYF workers are extremely lazy. • Social worker should not be doing job, absolutely no compassion, very cold – Berlin office. • Child specific provider, child left which was probably best for us. • Having two brothers was too much for our 1st time. • Conflict with grandchildren who saw foster kids misbehaving. • DCYF would not supply information to provider on break-in to own home by juvenile ex-foster child. • Went back to school. • Child aged out; became a mental health provider. • Didn't agree with DCYF policy. • Was respite provider, not paid when child did not come. 	14 64%	8 36%	12

Please look over all the reasons you checked on this page and write the letter of the one reason above which you consider to be the most important:

Twenty former DCYF foster parents commented:

- **c.** **1**
 - **d.** **1**
 - **g.** **3**
 - **m.** **2**
 - **q. Behaviors between foster children not appropriate; social worker not interested in helping children.** **1**
 - **x.** **2**
 - **v.** **1**
 - **z.** **4**
 - **aa.** **1**
 - **dd.** **3**
 - **DCYF would not supply information to provider on break-in to own home by juvenile ex-foster child.**
 - **Child aged out; became a mental health provider.**
 - **For a specific child who left after a year, which was probably the best for me.**
 - **All of the above (a through dd).** **1**
- 20**

Appendix C – Survey Of Former DCYF Foster Parents (Continued)

2. If you stopped being a foster parent because of any problems with the foster care caseworker or the district office, please briefly describe these problems.

Fourteen former DCYF foster parents provided 18 comments:

- **Lack of Support / Communication.** **9**
 - **Child’s behaviors difficult.** **3**
 - **Other (Negative).** **5**
 - **Social workers lie. (2)**
 - **Berlin social worker is most inconsiderate, non-compassionate person I know.**
 - **When my dad passed away, they asked why I needed respite care for two foster children – couldn’t I deal with it with them.**
 - **Social worker more concerned with CYA than doing what’s best for children.**
 - **Other (Positive).** **1**
 - **Case workers always supportive and helpful.**
- 18**

3. What **one thing** could have been done that would have prevented you from terminating as a foster parent?

Twenty-three former DCYF foster parents provided 26 comments:

- **Better support / communication by caseworker.** **10**
 - **Nothing.** **4**
 - **More information.** **2**
 - **Higher compensation.** **2**
 - **Other.** **8**
 - **More intensive therapy for foster child.**
 - **Adopting child.**
 - **Changed to private child placing agency, back with DCYF.**
 - **More hours in the day.**
 - **Not taking child in first place.**
 - **The court procedures.**
 - **Many parents called for respite that didn’t show up.**
 - **Cooperation of police and foster family that took over after us.**
- 26**

Appendix C – Survey Of Former DCYF Foster Parents (Continued)

4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	I was <u>never</u> pressured to accept a foster child placement.	14 45%	10 32%	4 13%	1 3%	2 6%	4
b.	I was <u>never</u> pressured to keep a foster child placement.	14 47%	5 17%	3 10%	1 3%	7 23%	5
c.	The DCYF always provided a complete description about a child placed with me.	6 21%	10 36%	3 11%	1 4%	8 29%	7
d.	The DCYF always provided sufficient notice before a foster child was placed with me.	6 22%	7 26%	9 33%	3 11%	2 7%	8
e.	Children placed with me were always the requested gender.	8 32%	7 28%	9 36%	0 0%	1 4%	10
f.	Children placed with me were always the requested age group.	7 28%	8 32%	5 20%	1 4%	4 16%	10
g.	School-aged children placed with me came from the school district in which I foster parented.	6 24%	3 12%	9 36%	5 20%	2 8%	10
h.	The children placed with me come from the town in which I foster parented.	5 19%	3 11%	8 30%	6 22%	5 19%	8
i.	The needs of each child placed with me were always well matched with what I could provide as a foster parent.	9 31%	12 41%	2 7%	4 14%	2 7%	6

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Eighteen former DCYF foster parents provided 20 comments:

- **b.** 5
 - **DCYF was slow, kept trying to convince us to keep teenager.**
 - **Took forever to find more suitable parents for child we couldn't handle.**
 - **Six weeks to get child moved.**
 - **When I had pregnancy trouble, they put me off continuously.**
 - **Only time caseworker was in constant contact was when we wanted to terminate placement.**

- **c.** 5
 - **Situation as an emergency respite provider resulted in several inappropriate matches, reason I terminated.**
 - **Child with special needs of which we were unaware and couldn't handle.**
 - **Left out small important facts like child was convicted of cruelty to animals, fire starter.**

Appendix C – Survey Of Former DCYF Foster Parents (Continued)

- Had young man three years before finding out he'd been in several emergency homes, still don't have complete records.
- Agency was responsible for the teenaged girl, naïve and inexperienced staff that did not tell us child hit and attacked prior foster mothers; DCYF not directly responsible.
- **d.** **3**
 - Children were in immediate need of care, only four hours notice for first child, 24 hours for second.
 - Need was always immediate, hadn't even gone through training program.
 - Sometimes two hours notice.
- **f.** Requested children 0-6 months; they were 13 and 15. **1**
- **g.** Boys were 20 miles from their schools. **1**
- **h.** **2**
 - Dangerous for child and parent to be in same small town, everyone knows each other.
 - Boys were 20 miles from their friends.
- **i.** **3**
 - Had child with special needs of which we were unaware and couldn't handle.
 - Had a lot of trouble with her emotional needs.
 - Child's special needs placed him outside town for six years before I got him.

—
20

5. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding DCYF support for foster parents:

		1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree					
		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	District office foster care licensing workers treated me with respect	17 55%	11 35%	0 0%	1 3%	2 6%	4
b.	Interactions with the foster care licensing worker made me feel I was a valued part of a foster care team	14 45%	10 32%	4 13%	0 0%	3 10%	4
c.	[For CPSW placements] District office child protection social worker (CPSW) caseworkers treated me with respect	6 30%	6 30%	5 25%	1 5%	2 10%	15
d.	[For CPSW placements] Interactions with the district office CPSW caseworkers made me feel I was a valued part of a foster care team	5 26%	5 26%	4 21%	3 16%	2 11%	16
e.	[For juvenile services placements] Juvenile services officers caseworkers treated me with respect	3 19%	5 31%	7 44%	0 0%	1 6%	19
f.	[For juvenile services placements] Interactions with the juvenile services officer caseworkers (for juvenile services placements) made me feel I was a valued part of a foster care team	3 20%	2 13%	8 53%	1 7%	1 7%	20

Appendix C – Survey Of Former DCYF Foster Parents (Continued)

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
g.	My telephone calls were quickly returned by the foster child's assigned caseworker	5 16%	11 35%	6 19%	3 10%	6 19%	4
h.	If I could not reach my foster child's assigned caseworker for difficulties that arose during normal business hours, someone at the district office was readily available to help	3 11%	9 32%	7 25%	6 21%	3 11%	7
i.	Foster care related help for difficulties that arose after normal business hours (not including weekends) was readily available	2 7%	7 25%	8 29%	6 21%	5 18%	7
j.	Foster care related help for difficulties that arose on the weekends was readily available	2 7%	7 25%	9 32%	3 11%	7 25%	7
k.	State (central) Office staff treated me with respect	7 25%	12 43%	7 25%	1 4%	1 4%	7
l.	Interactions with State (central) Office staff made me feel I was part of a foster care team	5 19%	10 37%	9 33%	1 4%	2 7%	8
m.	I received foster care payments on a timely basis	6 20%	13 43%	3 10%	5 17%	3 10%	5
n.	I received a copy of the Case Plan related to foster children in my care	7 23%	9 30%	5 17%	2 7%	7 23%	5
o.	I was involved in the case planning process	5 17%	8 28%	5 17%	5 17%	6 21%	6
p.	The caseworker kept me informed about what was happening in my foster child's case	5 17%	10 33%	6 20%	4 13%	5 17%	5
q.	I received a written notice or letter inviting me to the administrative case review (which was usually held at the district office every six months)	7 23%	10 33%	6 20%	1 3%	6 20%	5
r.	I was aware of the circumstances leading to DCYF involvement with my foster child	7 23%	13 42%	3 10%	6 19%	2 6%	4
s.	When I was a new foster parent, it would have helped me to have been mentored by an experienced foster parent	5 17%	6 20%	14 47%	2 7%	3 10%	5

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Ten former DCYF foster parents provided 32 comments:

- a. Thought husband and I weren't valued by DCYF. 1
- b. 2
 - Minimum information communicated to us.
 - Worker made decisions many times without my input, or already had mind made up.
- d. Opinions and comments not taken seriously. 1
- g. 4
 - Waited three weeks for paper allowing us to leave state with child.
 - Calls never returned by caseworker.
 - Days would go by before calls were returned.

Appendix C – Survey Of Former DCYF Foster Parents (Continued)

- **Very difficult to get a hold of anyone.**
 - **h.** **3**
 - **Always got voicemail, not a person.**
 - **Very difficult to get a hold of anyone.**
 - **Seemed like a big go round.**
 - **i.** **2**
 - **If worker unavailable, problem took hours to resolve.**
 - **Alternative was to call juvenile services which was not appropriate for need.**
 - **j.** **2**
 - **I provided care on weekends and no one to contact.**
 - **We received no help on weekends, police in town do not want to help.**
 - **m.** **4**
 - **Small error resulted in non-payment, it was “too bad” if payment was a month until it could go through the system again, not always our fault, rules bend when in favor of the State.**
 - **Receiving payments was a long, arduous process, left me responsible for obtaining payment instead of automatic payment.**
 - **Was up and down.**
 - **In most instances received very timely, a few were very late (two to four weeks), and some were sent to another individual in error.**
 - **n.** **3**
 - **No involvement of case planning process.**
 - **Never received or was aware of a “written case plan”.**
 - **Little contact relative to planning process, children placed with long term intent.**
 - **o.** **2**
 - **Was lied to by caseworker about plans for child.**
 - **No involvement of case planning process.**
 - **p.** **2**
 - **Was lied to by caseworker about plans for child.**
 - **Severely misinformed on case altogether.**
 - **q.** **2**
 - **Never heard of it.**
 - **Not until he was 16 and meetings involved the district court.**
 - **r.** **3**
 - **Little important facts were always left out - fire starter.**
 - **I still don’t know.**
 - **Were not informed of child’s background.**
 - **s. No, we already brought up our own kids successfully.** **1**
- 32**

Appendix C – Survey Of Former DCYF Foster Parents (Continued)

6. On average, your foster child’s caseworker made visits to your home to see foster children in your care:

a. Once every month	11 (41%)	e. Once every five months	1 (4%)
b. Once every two months	5 (19%)	f. Once every six months	1 (4%)
c. Once every three months	1 (4%)	g. Once every nine months	1 (4%)
d. Once every four months	1 (4%)	h. Less than once every nine months	6 (22%)
NR:	8		

7. Through which one of the following DCYF district offices primarily were you a foster family home?

a. Berlin District Office	4	g. Littleton District Office	4
b. Claremont District Office	4	h. Manchester District Office	3
c. Concord District Office	3	i. Nashua District Office	2
d. Conway District Office	0	j. Portsmouth District Office	3
e. Keene District Office	4	k. Rochester District Office	3
f. Laconia District Office	3	l. Salem District Office	2

8. I was a licensed foster parent for _____ years.

Average:	3.2 years
Range:	0 to 10 years
Not licensed:	2
NR:	3

9. Since becoming a foster parent, I cared for _____ (number) foster children, not including respite care.

Average:	2.2 children
Range:	0 to 8 children
NR:	3

10. Were you a child-specific foster family care provider, that is, were you a foster home only for one or more specific children? _____ Yes _____ No

Yes:	18 (58%)
No:	13 (42%)
NR:	4

Appendix C – Survey Of Former DCYF Foster Parents (Continued)

11. Due to your experiences foster parenting for the DCYF, have you ever recommended to anyone not to foster parent?

		if yes, about how many persons? _____ persons
a. No:	22 (71%)	Average: 2.5 persons
b. Yes:	9 (29%)	Range: 1 to 4 persons
NR:	4	NR: 7

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please use a separate sheet of paper to forward any additional comments.

Eight former DCYF foster parents commented:

- Lot of hurt feelings over theft.
- Letter detailing feeling “devastated” by fostering experience, including caseworker not knowing who child was and never paying a home visit.
- Letter telling how foster parents were “humbled” by their experience, and their personal sacrifices on behalf of the child.
- Note saying there were some good experiences, but were problems with foster child: tried to drown foster parent’s child, started fire in home, destroyed a room, punctured holes in pool, broke bathtub, asked to keep foster children when foster parent’s father died.
- Had problems with numerous social workers over the years; adoption worker was excellent, one case worker was ok.
- Could have been a good experience if didn’t have to deal with certain social worker.
- Letter detailing behaviors by foster child, feelings of wanting to help child, and problems with therapists and social workers.
- Provided respite services for another agency.

APPENDIX D

SURVEY OF FORMER CHILD PLACING AGENCY FOSTER PARENTS

NOTES:

- **Responses are in bold.**
- **Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.**
- **Sixteen of 34 (47 percent) former child placing agency foster parents surveyed responded.**
- **NR = No Response.**

1. Why did you stop being a private child-placing agency foster parent?

<i>(please check Yes or No for each item)</i>		Yes	No	NR
a.	Age – felt too old to care for foster children	1 8%	11 92%	4
b.	Marital problems (divorce, separation, etc.)	1 8%	11 92%	4
c.	Health problems	0 0%	12 100%	4
d.	Moved/relocated	0 0%	12 100%	4
e.	Conflict between foster child and my own or adopted child	3 25%	9 75%	4
f.	Expect to have my own child or more of my own children	1 8%	11 92%	4
g.	Adopted foster child	3 23%	10 77%	3
h.	Adopted a different child	0 0%	12 100%	4
i.	Could not get type of child requested	2 17%	10 83%	4
j.	Poor communications with foster child's caseworker(s)	5 36%	9 64%	2
k.				
l.	Poor communications with foster care licensing worker	3 23%	10 77%	3
m.	Lack of support from foster child's caseworker(s)	6 46%	7 54%	3
n.				
o.	Lack of respite services	4 31%	9 69%	3
p.	Lack of day care	0 0%	12 100%	4

**Appendix D – Survey Of Former Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

<i>(please check Yes or No for each item)</i>		Yes	No	NR
q.	Lack of other services <i>(please specify)</i> : Five comments: • Counselors. (2) • Support. • Communication. • Orientation.	6 46%	7 54%	3
r.	Problems with foster child's parents	2 17%	10 83%	4
s.	Health care needs of foster child too difficult to manage	0 0%	12 100%	4
t.	Emotional needs of foster child too difficult to manage	4 33%	8 67%	4
v.	Behavior of foster child too difficult to manage	3 25%	9 75%	4
w.	Had difficulty seeing foster child leave	1 8%	11 92%	4
x.	Inadequate foster care reimbursements	4 33%	8 67%	4
y.	Foster care payments not timely	1 8%	11 92%	4
z.	I was a child-specific foster family care provider (that is, I was a foster home only for one or more specific children), so I stopped being a foster parent when there was no longer a need for care for the foster child(ren)	3 21%	11 79%	2
aa.	Became a DCYF foster family care provider	0 0%	12 100%	4
bb.	I could no longer meet my community's fire and safety requirements	0 0%	12 100%	4
cc.	I could no longer acquire sufficient in-service training hours	0 0%	12 100%	4

**Appendix D – Survey Of Former Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

<i>(please check Yes or No for each item)</i>		Yes	No	NR
dd.	Other reason for not continuing to be a foster parent <i>(please specify)</i> : Nine comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency did not provide all pertinent facts about child. • Wife’s mother lived with us, child got jealous. • Lack of DCYF support. • Lack of communication, trust, respect. • Burned out by kids who turned out to be more “disturbed” than anybody knew. • Agency discontinued calling after disagreement with caseworker re: child. • Always being second guessed by agency; don’t need to be told what needs to be done by agency and DCYF, who do not spend any time with child being serviced. • We only received older children and it conflicted with our teenagers, would have loved children aged ten and under. • Could no longer put up with abuse and neglect of agency’s foster program, for the children as well as our own well being. 	9 82%	2 18%	5

Please look over all the reasons you checked on this page and write the letter of the one reason above which you consider to be the most important:

Nine former child placing agency foster parents commented:

- g. **2**
 - m. **2**
 - q. **1**
 - z. **2**
 - Other (dd.) **2**
 - Lack of support from DCYF.
 - Burned out by too many kids who turned out to be much more “disturbed” than anyone knew.
- 9**

2. If you stopped being a foster parent because of any problems with the foster care caseworker or the agency, please briefly describe these problems.

Seven former child placing agency foster parents commented:

- Agency was terrible (pressured to accept placement, pressured to keep placement, did not get complete description of child, problems with matching).
- Agency offered all they could under their guidelines and services.

**Appendix D – Survey Of Former Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

- **Lack of timely support and action by DCYF to transfer case to agency, poor communication and response to messages.**
- **Unreturned phone calls; young, inexperienced caseworker hides behind façade of imperiousness.**
- **Agency, not the caseworker, supported the therapist over us.**
- **All those associated with case management (state, agency) have no clue but dictate what they feel needs to be done. Most treatment plans are boilerplate and really serve no purpose. Never saw a person from the state the 12 months we had a child.**
- **Never followed or maintained support promises. Unsited and inappropriate related educational background of case managers, who were trying to learn on the job at the cost of service and quality care to foster kids and support family. Damage control tactics.**

3. What **one thing** could have been done that would have prevented you from terminating as a foster parent?

Ten former child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **Easier if children are put before rules, regs, and bureaucrats.**
- **Nothing.**
- **Intense support and consistent counseling for us and the child.**
- **Make case move more quickly. Clear communication and decisions.**
- **Although caseworker made things quite difficult, we left foster care because we adopted our foster children.**
- **To place just the right child.**
- **Didn't realize I was terminated. Agency hasn't called me, I enjoyed doing foster care.**
- **Better pay and being allowed to raise the child as best as we possibly can. Too much interference and stupid demands, meetings, etc.**
- **Receiving children ten and under so it would not conflict with our own children who are teenagers.**
- **The circus act and soap opera antics of the agency. Stand by and allow them to continue in my home unaccountable.**

4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

		1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree					
		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	I was <u>never</u> pressured to accept a foster child placement.	9 64%	1 7%	2 14%	1 7%	1 7%	2
b.	I was <u>never</u> pressured to keep a foster child placement.	6 43%	1 7%	0 0%	3 21%	4 29%	2
c.	The agency always provided a complete description about children placed with me.	3 25%	1 8%	1 8%	3 25%	4 33%	4
d.	The agency always provided sufficient notice before a foster child was placed with me.	1 9%	3 27%	5 45%	2 18%	0 0%	5

**Appendix D – Survey Of Former Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
e.	Children placed with me were always the requested gender.	3 27%	4 36%	3 27%	1 9%	0 0%	5
f.	Children placed with me were always the requested age group.	4 36%	4 36%	2 18%	1 9%	0 0%	5
g.	School-aged children placed with me came from the school district I lived in.	1 10%	0 0%	5 50%	2 20%	2 20%	6
h.	The children placed with me came from the town I lived in.	1 9%	0 0%	5 45%	2 18%	3 27%	5
i.	The needs of each child placed with me were always well matched with what I could provide as a foster parent.	5 38%	3 23%	3 23%	1 8%	1 8%	3

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Twelve former child placing agency foster parents provided 15 comments:

- **b.** **4**
 - **Pressured because after six months a long term placement was not in place.**
 - **One teenager came/started with unacceptable behaviors, called caseworker who told me to keep her until the next day; strongly disagreed with caseworker.**
 - **Was pressured to keep a child by being told child would have to go to a group home.**
 - **We were pressured to keep individuals that were working quite hard to blow out of placement, sometimes at the cost of my family's safety and security.**
- **c.** **3**
 - **Told me I was not entitled to know all info relative to the child.**
 - **Agency quite closed mouthed because of confidentiality reasons.**
 - **In most cases the child's positive side is sold to the foster parents. Often times very large issues surface after placement that have been downplayed or cited as unimportant.**
- **d.** **1** **Was a very flexible parent who would take children in at the last minute, and more than once.**
- **e.** **1** **Always requested girls and only two times out of the three to four years fostering did I receive a girl but it didn't last.**
- **f.** **1** **Always requested young children, would foster again only if it was age specific.**
- **g.** **2**

**Appendix D – Survey Of Former Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

- Children placed with us were from seacoast area and Derry and we live in Auburn.
- Children always have to change schools and sometimes this can be a good thing.
- **h.** **3**
 - Child was from North Country and had to be here due to service. Case manager was always there for her from the Berlin area.
 - Children placed with us were from seacoast area and Derry and we live in Auburn.
 - Children always have to change schools and sometimes this can be a good thing.

5. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding agency support for foster parents:

		1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree					
		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	Private agency foster care licensing workers treated me with respect	11 69%	2 13%	0 0%	2 13%	1 6%	0
b.	Interactions with the private agency foster care licensing worker made me feel I was a valued part of a foster care team	8 53%	4 27%	1 7%	2 13%	0 0%	1
c.	Private agency foster child caseworkers treated me with respect	11 69%	3 19%	0 0%	2 13%	0 0%	0
d.	Interactions with private agency foster child caseworkers made me feel I was a valued part of a foster care team	8 53%	3 20%	1 7%	3 20%	0 0%	1
e.							
f.							
g.	My telephone calls were quickly returned by the foster child's assigned caseworker	6 40%	2 13%	5 33%	0 0%	2 13%	1
h.	If I could not reach my foster child's assigned caseworker for difficulties that arose during normal business hours, someone at the agency was readily available to help	4 27%	3 20%	2 13%	3 20%	3 20%	1
i.	Foster care related help for difficulties that arose after normal business hours (not including weekends) was readily available	5 33%	2 13%	2 13%	2 13%	4 27%	1
j.	Foster care related help for difficulties that arose on the weekends was readily available	4 31%	3 23%	2 15%	2 15%	2 15%	3
k.	I was respected by agency (central) office staff	6 40%	5 33%	2 13%	1 7%	1 7%	1
l.	Interactions with agency (central) office staff made me feel I was part of a foster care team	6 40%	5 33%	2 13%	1 7%	1 7%	1
m.	I received foster care payments on a timely basis	10 67%	5 33%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1

**Appendix D – Survey Of Former Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree		1	2	3	4	5	NR
n.	I received a copy of the Case Plan related to foster children in my care	6 43%	6 43%	0 0%	1 7%	1 7%	2
o.	I was involved in the case planning process	3 21%	5 36%	3 21%	3 21%	0 0%	2
p.	The caseworker kept me informed about what was happening in my foster child's case	3 21%	3 21%	2 14%	4 29%	2 14%	2
q.	I receive a written notice or letter inviting me to the administrative case review (which was usually held at the office every six months)	6 40%	3 20%	3 20%	2 13%	1 7%	1
r.	I was aware of the circumstances leading to agency involvement with my foster child	4 29%	4 29%	3 21%	2 14%	1 7%	2
s.	When I was a new foster parent, it would have helped me to have been mentored by an experienced foster parent	7 47%	3 20%	2 13%	2 13%	1 7%	1

If you rated any of the items as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) on the following page:

Seven former child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **Think State workers are overloaded and would not have been a foster parent if didn't have a great private agency.**
- **Agency and State were no help. We were seen as individuals doing it for a financial windfall, pay was quite poor once everything added up; agency kept part of the money.**
- **Dealing with private agency we contracted with to adopt child was much more agreeable, contrasted like night and day with the DCYF.**
- **First 12 months of agency interaction was reciprocal even with our serious doubts about case managers; concerned about the direction of the programming and the intentional manipulation of case notes, forced on us, to qualify for Medicaid funding; we were slowly pushed out the door. Damage control, this agency's style.**
- **So many meetings and hearings for my foster child it was crushing, felt some should have been managed by agency or DCYF case manager.**
- **We dealt with agency in Manchester who was excellent.**
- **We dealt with DSS in Massachusetts.**

**Appendix D – Survey Of Former Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

6. On average, your foster child’s caseworker made visits to your home to see foster children in your care:

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| a. Once every month | 9 (64%) | e. Once every five months | 1 (7%) |
| b. Once every two months | 2 (14%) | f. Once every six months | 0 (0%) |
| c. Once every three months | 2 (14%) | g. Once every nine months | 0 (0%) |
| d. Once every four months | 0 (0%) | h. Less than once every nine months | 0 (0%) |
| NR: | 2 | | |

7. Through which one of the following private agencies primarily were you a foster family home?

- | | | | |
|---|----------|---|----------|
| a. Adoptive Families for Children | 0 | i. LDS Social Services | 0 |
| b. Bethany Christian Services | 0 | j. Lutheran Social Services | 2 |
| c. Boston Adoptive Bureau | 0 | k. NH Catholic Charities | 0 |
| d. Casey Family Services | 1 | l. New Hope Christian Services | 0 |
| e. Child and Family Services of NH | 2 | m. North American Family Institute (NFI) North | 1 |
| f. Creative Advocates for Children and Families | 0 | n. Vermont Children’s Aid Society | 0 |
| g. Easter Seal Society | 9 | o. Wide Horizons for Children | 0 |
| h. Greater Laconia Community Services | 0 | p. Other (<i>please specify</i>): Mass DSS | 1 |

8. I was a licensed foster parent for ____ years.

Average: 2.7 years
Range: 0 to 7 years
Not Licensed: 1

9. During the time I was a foster parent, I cared for ____ (number) foster children, not including respite care.

Average: 2.4 children
Range: 1 to 6 children
Not Applicable: 1

10. Were you a child-specific foster family care provider, that is, were you a foster home only for one or more specific children?

No: 6 (38%)
Yes: 10 (63%)

**Appendix D – Survey Of Former Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

11. Due to your experiences foster parenting for a child-placing agency, have you ever recommended to anyone not to foster parent?

No: 12 (75%)

Yes: 4 (25%)

If yes, about how many persons?

Four former child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **As many as ask about our experience.**
- **100 and we plan to talk to 1000 more after the way we were treated.**
- **Many.**
- **Five plus.**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please use the space below, or a separate sheet of paper, to forward any additional comments.

Nine former child placing agency foster parents commented:

- **Quite negative, sad reality of our experience. State also no help, example of this was at Christmas, a pair of jeans and shirt arrived, unfortunately they would have better served a four year old rather than someone 14. Actual care providers should have more say than DCYF and agency. Very disappointing experience.**
- **Would love to foster again if the children were ten and under. Adoption unit – would love to adopt a little girl.**
- **Very difficult to foster parent therapeutic foster children while raising your own children. Especially difficult when you “see things” the agency and therapist don’t see, and feel you have to prove it to them to get any help. Very difficult time with our first “private” therapist.**
- **As ISO provider, had more issues than “normal” placements. Several failed placements, last client ended up in a group home and overdosed; hard to accept.**
- **Wouldn’t want anybody to go through the hell we’ve been through with agency while trying to give these great kids a loving, caring home. It’s not the kids, it’s the self-important, title heavy caseworkers and managers that make fostering a sinking ship in the State of NH. Stop paying money pits like agencies who put profits and self preservation first. Get people to randomly pop in and audit these smiling robbers. Listen to what the kids have to say.**
- **Found NH not very helpful for adoption, so went out of state. DSS (MA) extremely supportive. They provide a 1-800 number for us to use.**
- **Most doesn’t apply to us, fostered one child for nine months who came from MA. Planned to adopt her. When we tried to get it organized so she could come to NH, both agencies dealing with foster care were VERY unorganized,**

**Appendix D – Survey Of Former Child Placing Agency Foster Parents
(Continued)**

unaware of what needed doing or to be filed. Major lack of communication between the state agencies.

- **Incredible turnover, new person at every turn, foster parent has to “retell” the story, give background, often provide records. Home counselor rarely kept appointments; inconvenienced family.**
- **Parents need group homes vs. innocent children.**

APPENDIX E

SURVEY OF DCYF CPSWs AND JPPOs

NOTES:

- Responses are in bold.
 - Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
 - Thirty-six of 44 (82 percent) child protective service workers and juvenile probation and parole officers surveyed responded to this survey.
 - NR = No response.
-

1. How long have you been in your current position?

a. Less than 1 year	3	(8%)
b. Between 1-3 years:	10	(28%)
c. Between 4-6 years:	6	(17%)
d. Between 6-8 years:	5	(14%)
e. Between 8-10 years:	4	(11%)
f. Over 10 years:	8	(22%)
NR:	0	

2. For whom do you work?

<i>For DCYF CPSWs only</i>		<i>For DCYF JSOs only</i>	
a. Berlin DO	4 (11%)	m. Concord JPO	0 (0%)
b. Claremont DO	1 (3%)	n. Conway JPO	1 (3%)
c. Concord DO	0 (0%)	o. Keene JPO	1 (3%)
d. Conway DO	0 (0%)	p. Laconia JPO	2 (6%)
e. Keene DO	2 (6%)	q. Manchester JPO	1 (3%)
f. Laconia DO	2 (6%)	r. Nashua JPO	0 (0%)
g. Littleton DO	3 (9%)	s. Portsmouth JPO	2 (6%)
h. Manchester DO	2 (6%)	t. Salem JPO	2 (6%)
i. Nashua DO	3 (9%)		
j. Portsmouth DO	3 (9%)		
k. Rochester DO	4 (11%)		
l. Salem DO	2 (6%)		
NR:	1		

3. Is there a need for a cohesive State-wide foster parent recruitment effort in addition to current district office recruitment efforts?

a. Yes:	33	(97%)
b. No:	1	(3%)
NR:	2	

Appendix E - Survey Of DCYF CPSWs And JPPOs (Continued)

4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding foster care related supervision and support:

		1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly Disagree					
		1	2	3	4	5	NR
a.	My workload level does not prevent me from providing foster care oversight as required by policy	4 13%	8 26%	4 13%	10 32%	5 16%	5
b.	My supervisor's workload level does not prevent my supervisor from providing supervision over my foster care casework	5 16%	10 32%	7 23%	7 23%	2 6%	5
c.	My supervisor carries a caseload (<i>if answer is 4, skip question d below</i>)		11 38%		18 62%		7
d.	Because my supervisor carries a caseload, I do not receive sufficient supervision over my foster care casework	0 0%	2 15%	3 23%	3 23%	5 38%	23
e.	My supervisor stresses the need to conduct monthly in-home visits to foster children	10 36%	8 29%	5 18%	5 18%	0 0%	8
f.	Whenever I do not conduct monthly in-home visits to foster children, my supervisor counsels me that I need to improve my efforts	6 20%	8 27%	7 23%	8 27%	1 3%	6
g.	My supervisor stresses the need to maintain up-to-date contact logs	13 42%	15 48%	2 6%	1 3%	0 0%	5
h.	Whenever I do not maintain up-to-date contact logs, my supervisor counsels me that I need to improve my efforts	4 14%	11 38%	9 31%	3 10%	2 7%	7
i.	My supervisor stresses that foster parents are to be strongly supported	9 30%	17 57%	3 10%	1 3%	0 0%	6
j.	Whenever I do not strongly support foster parents, my supervisor counsels me that I need to improve my efforts	2 7%	13 43%	10 33%	5 17%	0 0%	6
k.	My supervisor stresses that foster parents are to be provided, in a timely manner, a copy of their respective foster child's case plan	2 7%	10 33%	8 27%	8 27%	2 7%	6
l.	If foster parents are not provided, in a timely manner, a copy of the foster child's case plan, my supervisor counsels me that I need to improve my efforts	2 7%	6 20%	13 43%	7 23%	2 7%	6

Appendix E - Survey Of DCYF CPSWs And JPPOs (Continued)

1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly Disagree							
		1	2	3	4	5	NR
m.	My supervisor stresses that the foster care licensing worker is to be apprised of foster care related information	12 40%	15 50%	2 7%	1 3%	0 0%	6
n.	Whenever I do not keep the foster care licensing worker apprised of foster care related information, my supervisor counsels me I need to improve my efforts	5 17%	10 34%	11 38%	3 10%	0 0%	7
o.	My supervisor stresses the need to involve foster parents in case plans	4 13%	11 37%	11 37%	2 7%	2 7%	6
p.	Whenever I do not involve foster parents in case plans, my supervisor counsels me I need to improve my efforts	2 7%	7 24%	14 48%	4 14%	2 7%	7
q.	My supervisor uses a proactive, not reactive, management style	13 43%	8 27%	4 13%	3 10%	2 7%	6
r.	Supervisors only approve those supplemental foster care payments that are warranted	13 43%	11 37%	5 17%	1 3%	0 0%	6
s.	I feel foster care cases are usually less of a priority than my other cases	1 3%	0 0%	2 7%	13 43%	14 47%	6
t.	My supervisor stresses the need to be compliant with BRIDGES data entry requirements.	6 19%	19 61%	3 10%	2 6%	1 3%	5
u.	Whenever I am not compliant with BRIDGES data entry requirements, my supervisor counsels me I need to improve my efforts	6 20%	14 47%	7 23%	2 7%	1 3%	6
v.	I receive annual performance evaluations	11 35%	12 39%	4 13%	3 10%	1 3%	5
w.	Communication between my office and the State central office needs no improvement	1 3%	6 19%	6 19%	9 29%	9 29%	5
x.	Supervisors provide written improvement plans to personnel who are not in compliance with DCYF policy regarding required monthly in-home visits to children in in-state foster homes	0 0%	5 17%	18 62%	4 14%	2 7%	7

Appendix E - Survey Of DCYF CPSWs And JPPOs (Continued)

If you rated any of the items on the previous page as a 4 (disagree) or 5 (strongly disagree), please explain your rating(s) below:

Thirty DCYF field staff provided 115 comments regarding this question. The most frequent responses were:

- **Workloads are too high.** 12
- **All cases have the same priority.** 11
- **Communication between State and field offices needs improvement.** 10
- **State office has no idea of field operations.** 5
- **Do not provide copies of case plans, not told to.** 4
- **Foster placements are higher priority.** 4

5. Please discuss your feelings about how well foster parents are prepared for foster parenting by pre-service training.

Twenty-seven DCYF field staff provided 38 comments:

- **Trained well.** 10
- **Never enough, experience is essential.** 10
- **Not trained well.** 7
- **Certain areas need improvement, change.** 6
- **Other.** 3
- **Not applicable, do not know.** 2
- 38**

6. Please discuss your feelings about how well in-service training improves foster parent skills:

Twenty-six DCYF field staff provided 35 comments:

- **Well, adequately.** 10
- **Not applicable, do not know.** 9
- **Certain areas need more emphasis, change.** 6
- **Not well, not necessarily.** 6
- **Experience is required.** 2
- **Other.** 2
- 35**

7. Have any organizational changes decreased the quality of DCYF foster family care field practice?

- a. Yes: 7 (32%)
- b. No: 15 (68%)
- NR: 14

Appendix E - Survey Of DCYF CPSWs And JPPOs (Continued)

If you answered "Yes", please specify each organizational change and the resultant decrease in field practice quality:

Seventeen DCYF field staff provided 19 comments. Includes one or more comments by respondents to question seven who answered "yes" or "no", or by those who provided no response.

- Not applicable. 10
- Workload. 3
- Policy changes. 2
- BRIDGES. 2
- Staffing reductions. 2
- 19**

8. What organizational change(s) could improve the foster family care program, and why?

Twenty-four DCYF field staff provided 32 comments:

- More foster parent support (e.g. financial, programmatic, teaming, training). 10
- Reduce workloads. 9
- Not applicable. 5
- More recruiting, public relations. 3
- Increased foster parent quality, skill. 3
- More foster homes. 2
- 32**

9. To enter all the required foster family care information in BRIDGES, about how much time per week would you have to spend?

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| a. Less than 2 hours: | 1 | (4%) |
| b. 2-5 hours: | 9 | (35%) |
| c. 6-10 hours: | 7 | (27%) |
| d. 11-20 hours: | 6 | (23%) |
| e. 21-30 hours: | 2 | (7%) |
| f. More than 30 hours: | 1 | (4%) |
| NR: | 10 | |

10. How much time do you *actually* spend per week entering required foster family care information in BRIDGES?

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|
| a. Less than 2 hours: | 6 | (22%) |
| b. 2-5 hours: | 16 | (59%) |
| c. 6-10 hours: | 5 | (19%) |
| d. 11-20 hours: | 0 | (0%) |
| e. 16-20 hours: | 0 | (0%) |
| NR: | 9 | |

Appendix E - Survey Of DCYF CPSWs And JPPOs (Continued)

11. If you do not enter all required foster family care information into BRIDGES, please explain why you do not *(select all that apply)*:

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| a. Feel that casework comes first; do BRIDGES data entry when I can. | 24 (96%) |
| b. Spend too much time in court. | 14 (56%) |
| c. It's more important to enter non-foster family care information than foster family care information. | 4 (16%) |
| d. Not enough training in BRIDGES. | 5 (20%) |
| e. BRIDGES is too hard to use. | 8 (32%) |
| f. Don't like using computer. | 2 (8%) |
| g. Prefer using paper files. | 4 (16%) |
| h. Supervisor does not check if I use BRIDGES. | 1 (4%) |
| i. Other <i>(please specify)</i> : | 7 (28%) |
| Ten comments: | |
| • BRIDGES lacks utility. | (6) |
| • Time constraints. | (2) |
| • Not applicable. | |
| • Fieldwork has priority. | |
| NR: | 11 |

12. How has BRIDGES improved foster family care case management? Please check all that apply.

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| a. Data is more accurate. | 7 |
| b. More information is accessible. | 12 |
| c. Information is more organized. | 15 |
| d. You can retrieve information faster. | 13 |
| e. Other: | 4 |
| Four comments: | |
| • Unknown. | |
| • Everyone has access to info including State office. This helps covering others' cases. It was a nightmare to cover others' cases with paper files. | |
| • Can read logs - penmanship issue. | |
| • Easier to type case plan - improved quality. | |

Appendix E - Survey Of DCYF CPSWs And JPPOs (Continued)

f. It has not improved foster family care case management. 7

Six comments:

- Multiplied workload three times, the promise was appealing but has not materialized.
- Takes more time that it is worth, rely more on the phone.
- Two to three times the work and half the time it is computer problems.
- Repetitive and redundant. You have to experiment to find things.
- Breaks down, freezes, cumbersome, redundant. Spend more time on the computer than in the field.
- Most foster family information is in paper files.

NR: 11

Two DCYF field staff provided additional comments:

- Always worked on BRIDGES, know no other method.
- Could not work without it, can get statuses.

13. Please discuss areas of the State's foster family care program that need improvement, and offer any recommendation you have for improvement(s). *(Please be specific.)*

Twenty five DCYF field staff provided 41 comments:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| • Increased support. | 15 |
| • Increased recruiting, more homes. | 11 |
| • Increased quality, quality control. | 5 |
| • Reduced workload. | 4 |
| • Increased communications. | 3 |
| • Not applicable, other. | <u>3</u> |
| | 41 |

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please use the space on the other side for any additional comments.

Twenty-eight DCYF field staff provided 31 comments:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Only local recruitment and retention, need for statewide planning. | 9 |
| • No foster family care specific information in BRIDGES. | 3 |
| • Do not know how much time it would take to enter all required foster family information into BRIDGES. | 2 |
| • It is better for each district office to do their own recruitment. We seldom use homes out of district. Why make it more complex than it needs to be? | 1 |
| • In seven years in juvenile services, only two kids in foster care, both placements being unsuccessful within one month. JPPO kids are not appropriate for foster care and do not utilize it as “burns out” foster parents. | 1 |

1

Appendix E - Survey Of DCYF CPSWs And JPPOs (Continued)

- **JPPOs only rarely need a foster home placement. The overwhelming reason youths require placement is because of continued behavioral problems. I am presently using one, I am very happy with it but it is rare – I have only used three or four in 13 years. I have had great success with therapeutic or intensive foster care - that type of foster care is appropriate for the youths JPPOs deal with. There are so few of them available, we need more of them. Although more expensive than "regular" foster care, they are much less expensive than any other residential placement we use, very appropriate, and “less restrictive” than the other placements we use.** 1
- **DCYF is a house of cards that is just crumbling. Everybody acknowledges it but nobody fixes it. I blame the legislature and a weak governor.** 1
- **Need more families. Dental care is an issue – can't get kids in to see dentists because no one takes Medicaid.** 1
- **No foster care licensing worker for over three years.** 1
- **Never done a foster care case.** 1
- **Hire more CPSWs and JSOs to supervise “homes” and “kids” better. Pay foster parents for their services, current rates are woefully inadequate. Let local offices run foster care with less “oversight” and meddling from State office.** 1
- **Foster parents should be eliminated; intensive, mini group homes are needed. Foster parents are not professional. Not enough foster parents.** 1
- **Don't know about statewide recruitment and retention efforts.** 1
- **Putting everything into BRIDGES is impossible. If I had ten cases, I could do it but I have 35 and will have ten more by the end of the month. I like the system but need caseloads lowered by 50 percent.** 1
- **Not enough recruiting in Laconia. Keep going back to same foster parents - had to search for foster parents but there is nobody. They are full, do not take teens, or are child specific. Foster care licensing worker position is vacant. Can not retain foster parents, the caseload becomes foster parents.** 1
- **Need locked facilities. Often wonder why the State office stresses need for delinquents in foster care. Delinquents have well entrenched habits, they are tough to deal with. Need to take them out of a home setting. Very rarely use foster care because the program is not designed for delinquents. It doesn't work, it is not designed for it. Foster parents need to be trained in what delinquency is, especially sex offenders.** 1
- **Most JPPO kids are in shelter care. Horrendous trying to find a place. The lack of beds leads to more out-of-district placements.** 1
- **The older kids are, the harder it is to place.** 1
- **People keep leaving and we get their cases.** 1
- **Currently have a child in an ISO - would love to have foster home. Searched and searched and finally went to next level - ISO. JPPOs so rarely use foster homes. One child in therapeutic foster care now. Kids are too disruptive for foster care; not even appropriate for general group homes.** 1

1
31

APPENDIX F

CURRENT STATUS OF PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS

The following is a summary, as of September 2001, of the status of the foster care observations contained in the 1993 performance audit report on the Child Settlement Program, and the 1998 performance audit report on the Juvenile Justice Organization. Copies of the prior reports can be obtained from the Office of Legislative Budget Assistant, Audit Division, 107 North Main Street, State House Room 102, Concord, NH 03301-4906.

Observation	Status
<u>Child Settlement Program</u>	
3. The Foster Parent Recruiting Program Needs Improvement (See Current Observation No. 1)	○ ○ ○
4. The Foster Parent Pre-Service Training Program Requires Additional Focus (See Current Observation No. 4)	● ○ ○
5. The Foster Parent In-Service Training Program Requires Improvement	● ● ○
6. DCYS Should Increase Agency Support To Foster Parents (See Current Observation Nos. 2, 4, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18)	○ ○ ○
9. DCYS Procedures For Determining Title IV-E Eligibility Are Insufficient	● ○ ○
10. DCYS Is Not Claiming All The Title IV-E Funds For Which It May Be Eligible	● ○ ○
11. Administrative Review Needs Improvement	● ○ ○
21. DCYS Has Failed To Establish Rate Setting Rules Relative To Foster Family Homes (See Current Observation No. 12)	○ ○ ○
24. DCYS Monitoring For Quality Assurance Should Be Ongoing	● ○ ○
25. DCYS Policies And Procedures Need Updating And Expanding	● ○ ○
26. DCYS Has Failed To Promulgate Administrative Rules In Numerous Areas (See Current Observation Nos. 6, 7, 12, 19, 20, 24, 26, and 27)	○ ○ ○
28. Insufficient Controls Regarding Conduct And Documentation Of Institutional Investigations	● ○ ○
<u>Juvenile Justice Organization</u>	
14. DCYF Child Protective Social Workers Are Handling CHINS Cases Without Statutory Authority	○ ○ ○

Status Key

Fully Resolved	● ● ●
Substantially Resolved	● ● ○
Partially Resolved	● ○ ○
Unresolved	○ ○ ○

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**PERFORMANCE AUDITS
ISSUED BY
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE BUDGET ASSISTANT**

<u>TITLE OF REPORT</u>	<u>DATE</u>
Department of Education – Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation And Service Delivery	August 2001
Department of Transportation – Bureau of Turnpikes Performance-Based Budgeting	April 2001
Judicial Branch – Family Division Pilot Program	January 2000
Year 2000 Computing Crisis – Special Report – Update	July 1999
Special Education – Catastrophic Aid Program	July 1999
Year 2000 Computing Crisis – Special Report	March 1999
Juvenile Justice Organization	November 1998
Marine Patrol Bureau Staffing	March 1998
Health Services Planning and Review Board	January 1998
Economic Development Programs	October 1997
Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program	May 1997
Child Support Services	December 1995
Multiple DWI Offender Program	December 1995
Managed Care Programs for Workers’ Compensation	November 1995
State Liquor Commission	July 1994
Property and Casualty Loss Control Program	November 1993
Child Settlement Program	March 1993
Workers’ Compensation Program for State Employees	January 1993
Prison Expansion	April 1992

**PERFORMANCE AUDITS
ISSUED BY
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE BUDGET ASSISTANT (Continued)**

<u>TITLE OF REPORT</u>	<u>DATE</u>
Developmental Services System	April 1991
Department of Administrative Services, Division of Plant and Property Management State Procurement and Property Management Services	June 1990
Mental Health Services System	January 1990
Hazardous Waste Management Program	June 1989
Review of the Indigent Defense Program	January 1989
Review of the Allocation of Highway Fund Resources To Support Agencies and Programs	March 1988
Review of the Public Employees Deferred Compensation Plan	December 1987
Management Review of the Policies and Procedures Of the Division of Plant and Property Management	June 1984
Review of the Management and Use of State Owned Passenger Vehicles and Privately Owned Vehicles Used at State Expense	August 1984

Copies of the above reports may be received by request from:

State of New Hampshire
Office of Legislative Budget Assistant
107 North Main Street, Room 102
Concord, New Hampshire 03301-4906
(603) 271-2785

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