



2014 Foster Parent Assessment Overview

History

In 2011, Secretary Ted Dallas, charged the Foster Parent Ombudsman to create and facilitate an instrument that can assess the perception of our public foster care providers of how the State, and in particular, the local departments of social services, are doing in regard to fulfilling the twelve stipulations of Maryland's Foster Parent Bill of Rights. This was deemed to be a report card, of sorts. (Foster Parent Bill of Rights attached as reference).

The Ombudsman created a twelve question survey which reflected the aforementioned stipulations. Input from focus groups of foster parents and staff helped to refine this assessment tool. This survey was sent along with a monthly payment statement, was published in Resource Parent News, and distributed/discussed at trainings, conferences, and association meetings across the State. A total of 625 responses were received, and included input from public providers in all twenty-four jurisdictions.

The results, state-wide and by jurisdiction, were generally good and showed that Maryland was doing an above average job in following the stipulations of the Bill of Rights for foster parents as promulgated in Family Law. As always, some areas that could be improved upon were reflected by the data. (The results of the 2011 assessment are attached for reference).

In 2014, the Foster Parent Ombudsman decided to render the assessment once again to measure any changes over the three year period. The survey tool used the same twelve questions, but was formatted on one side of one page with jurisdiction check off instead of write-in. Besides the more user friendly format, the assessment was available on line via Survey Monkey. It was also in the Resource Parent News and distributed/discussed at trainings, conferences, and association meetings. This time, there were 692 responses. This makes the survey even more statistically valid given the decrease in the number of public homes over the past three years. (The actual survey is attached as reference).

Assessment Highlights

Overall, the results were very good and showed an improvement in almost all areas. (The data for the 2014 assessment is attached for reference).

Of significant note, are the following questions...

11. Do you feel that you receive adequate services and support to care for the child(ren) placed in your home? In 2011, 57% said always or almost always; in 2014, the response was 66%.

10. Do you feel that you are treated with dignity, respect, and consideration as a member of a child welfare team? In 2011, 62% said always or almost always; in 2014, the response was 72%.

9. Do you feel adequate opportunities for resource parent training have been provided? In 2011, this was the highest percentage of all questions with 77% responding always or almost always; in 2014, it is still the highest percentage at 80%.

All questions earned higher scores, except two. The first, question 2 about after hours dropped one percentage point. The only other decrease was from 48% to 45% for being notified in writing about upcoming court hearings (question 5). A lower percentage to start, the data reflects that this is still an issue.

Conclusion

Good work is happening in Maryland in supporting our foster parents as reflected in the 2014 Maryland Public Resource Parent Local Department Assessment. There is always room for continued progress. Thanks to the local department administrations and staff for the work that you do. Also, thanks to David Ayer and his staff for compiling this data. It is hoped that as you peruse that data for individual jurisdictions, that you will find it useful in your continued efforts to provide safety, permanence, and well-being for the children in out-of-home care.