

Session 5.11 – An Overlooked Aspect of Improving Child Welfare Outcomes: Paying More Attention to Evaluating and Learning About Foster Parents

Panelists:

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Please note: The following is a direct transcription and has not been edited.

Mark Mannes: I'd like to welcome everybody to this session. I've been asked to make a general announcement to everyone and that is that as a reminder, the audio for this will session will be digitally recorded and once formatted for accessibility standards, will be made available through the Summit website. In lieu of written consent, participants who ask questions or provide comments during this will be giving their permission or consent to this recording, informed consent you know. If you have any questions about this recording, please feel free to talk with one of the summit support staff, some of the basic ground rules.

Anyway, I'd like to welcome you. My name is Mark Mannes. I'd like to welcome you to this round table session. And overlooked aspect of improving Child Welfare outcomes, pay more attention to evaluating and learning about foster parents.

The title I think speaks to are our panel sort of perspective, we think that, foster care, as we see foster cares as central, as critical to foster care, we see them as the agents of change. And we think that comparatively speaking, there has been relatively less research on foster parents or foster care as we like to call them. It's really an overlooked and neglected area of research we think. And because our foster parents play such a key role, and we think are essential to the sort of the outcomes, positive outcomes for children and youth in care.

We think that rethinking about a foster parent or foster care research agenda moving forward, revitalizing it and rethinking what the items on that agenda ought to be is really critical to advancing the work of Child Welfare.

The second thing I would like to say is that this is a round table, which means that this is, we're going to present some information and data, some ideas to you. But really we're presenting that in a way to sort of stimulate conversation, to stimulate dialogue. This is really about all of us in the room, sort of thinking this new collectively so the emphasis is on participation, the emphasis is on active engagement and involvement, we hope to sort of spend the next hour and half co-creating what we think that that research, what the evaluation and learning for foster parents or fosters cares need to be about – and it froze.

Because, we think that in order to sort of revitalize this agenda, this research agenda for foster cares and for foster parents, there is a number of players that need to be actively involved to sort of shaping and thinking about what that agenda needs to look like. And

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so, we've assembled a panel for today's presentation that represents, we think the key players, the key stakeholders, the key parties to making that work, certainly social work education institutions of higher education need to be a part of it.

And so, we have represented this from U.K. the College of Social Work and the training resource center. There needs to be research players involved, research partners involved and that's the International Center for Research and Innovation of fostering, I'll talk a little bit more about that in a moment.

And lastly, we also need to have deliverers, people who work directly, recruiting and supporting the work of foster cares, also need to be intimately involved and extensively involved in figuring out what the research, what the evaluation and the learning needs to be. So, we've tried to create, we tried to create a panel here that represents all of those key perspectives to help us to think about it in a more holistic way and to think about it in a way that we think will lead to greater success.

Again, my name is Mark Mannes, I've been working in Child Welfare for about 25 years. I have a number of different positions from a number of different perspectives. I currently lead a – again, an organization called the International Center for Research and Innovation in fostering, that's a mouthful, we call it ICRA for short. And ICRA essentially is a research and development or research innovation unit that's part of an international company called the Core Assets Group Limited. And the Core Assets Group Limited provides fostering services to about 3,000 young people in a 11 countries all over the world, countries in Europe, countries in Asia and countries now in North America.

And I'm going to turn it over, so the other members of the panel can introduce themselves.

Kay Hoffman: And I'm Kay Hoffman from the University of Kentucky. And I have been in U.K. for I think a long time, as I recall, 13 years or so. And I was dean of the college for a long time too and always active and interested in the creation of new and hopefully effective partnerships with our state. And so, my part in this really has to do with support and training. And I'm happy to be here.

Missy Segress: Hi, I'm Missy Segress. I'm also at the University of Kentucky. I'm currently the director of the training resource center they are part of our larger college of social work. I've been there for about four years. However, I've been at the University for about 11 and really come from a background of public health and mental health. So, really looking at how we can put many of those trans-disciplinary kinds of things into place for Child Welfare as part of what our center focus is on. So, we'll be looking at that as it relates to training and support hopefully.

Christopher Graber: And I'm Chris Graber and I am the CEO of Key Assets Kentucky, which is a deepened therapeutic foster care provider for hard to place kids, really in eastern Kentucky. And I got involved with this organization because, I've been around

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foster care, in and around foster care for about 25 years I was a foster parent myself. And so, I saw exporting kids from eastern Kentucky to more urban areas. And if you're exporting a kid from eastern Kentucky to Lowe, you might as well put them on the moon.

And we have something called Appalachian culture out there. And the kids were losing contact with the land and the families and all of those things. So, I saw this as an opportunity to put my money where my mouth was and just see if we couldn't do something really, really deepened and innovative to help keep kids in their communities, close to their families and I always tell providers when I'm out in Eastern Kentucky because like probably some of you, there aren't lot of resources east by 75 people, don't really like to come to Eastern Kentucky for a reason now I guess I do.

And so, I tell people all the time, the Calvary is not coming, we're the Calvary, we have to figure this out. So, I saw this as an opportunity and I just did this, eight months ago, I was at a cool consulting gig and really liked all that and that was great. And then I decided well, I'll put your money where your mouth is and see if it works.

And I want to suggest to you, that if you're going to do a headshot, you do at the day you get back from vacation because you will never be more relaxed or tanned. So, if I do this is January or something like that, I'm going to have to properly change the picture. It was not attaining but that was real from Santa Bell Island, just so you know.

I want to start out because the core of all this and you guys heard this morning, we know something about kids, okay, is that right? We know something about the kids we're serving. This is from the recent youth study, one in four of our youth will be in jail if they've been in foster care, and two years of leaving care, that's a scary statistic. There is no, you know, I know when we go out and we speak to groups of people, everybody wants us to sugarcoat it and talk about the strengths and all that stuff.

Some of the stuff you just can't sugarcoat, some of the stuff needs to kind of be in your face and stark. And some – people need to care about this. Over half of the youth leaving care will experience homelessness. I mean, can you imagine having two children and knowing that one of them is going to be homeless just by virtue of the circumstance they were in. 37% will not have a high school degree or a GED. Fewer than 2% own a college degree compared with 33% of their non-looked after peers.

And girls in foster care, six times more likely to give birth before age 21 than the general population. But I give you all the low stats to say that we do know something about the kids and back to what Mark said earlier, our cares are the key agents of change. They are what, makes the system go. Because you're once a month, visit once a week – week visit if you're part of the system doesn't really have a 50-min hour once a week, really doesn't do it.

So, those cares are really, really critical but you know, we know so little about them. We notice something about our workforce, we know like I said, we're getting more and more information on our kids but the actual cares, we kind of, that's kind of a second thought.

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And so, that's why we wanted to start the discussion today. If you're looking for answers, I bet you may leave here little disappointed.

But if you're really into the whole concept of digging in and getting answers to the questions in the future, then I hope you've come to the right place. So, Mark's going to go over with you a little bit about what we know. And then, we're each going to talk to you a little bit about some questions we've come up with. And they're just kind of balls of clay if you will, and we can stop them and talk about why they matter and how they need to be different and how they need to be phrased. So, Mark, you want to talk a little bit?

Mark Mannes: So, I'm going to just share with you, very quickly five minutes or so, some relatively recent study findings that focused on foster parents, foster cares, it's not meant to be an exhaustive sort of review. It's just meant to be, again to highlight certain findings that we think are very useful to initiating and stimulating an informed and insightful conversation about what the future research agenda for foster cares should need ought to be.

So, here is a study, 2005, there are research triangle institute. I think this was done with the assistant secretary for planning and evaluation money so, very interesting results. Again, not surprising high rates of foster care turnover, right. 20% exiting, about 20% exit the foster care or families each year, sort of what the load is on average cares, had about one or two children, a home at a time, so the capacity sort of issue to think about.

The third one, the third bullet, interesting sort of the – the sort of distribution of responsibility, in those three states, in Mexico, Oklahoma and Oregon, so, about one fifth, so about 20% of the foster care population, 20% of the homes families, provided between 60% and 72% of all the days of foster care. So, a lion's share of the responsibility is falling on a small number of families. Interesting, you can interpret, you can talk about what that means, to interpret that in different ways, but that sort of a very interesting descriptive statistic as it were to talk about the system.

Fourth bullet, media and length of service in foster care, time a foster care spends, about 8 to 14 months across those three states in that year in 2005, and a interesting suggestion there is that, many children's actual placements in foster care are longer than the typical foster parents or foster care career. Sort of, interesting to sort of think about that. And in terms of placement stability, etcetera, things like outcomes, that are important outcomes like that.

And then, the last bullet, sort of interesting statement that when a foster care does not have a child in them for at least 90 days, they're sort of out of the mix, they're out of the system, they're not going to get any new placement, sort of a very interesting, when there is that gap and sort of engagement and involvement, those sort of move to the – their off load or sort of off board in some kind of sense. They're no longer actively involved.

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Couple of interesting, recent findings around foster care effectiveness, Rick Barf who moderated the planning recession, a woman Elizabeth Fernandez from Australia, just public in 2010, a book that looked at foster care all over the world, all over the globe, what do we know, what have we learned, included in that was a study by gentlemen by the name of Ian Sinclair, who talked about what his research showed it's effectiveness factors of foster cares, that cares who chose to engage, and what's you know, I think we're familiar with it, authoritative sort of parenting that that tended to translate into greater degrees of effectiveness.

And then this whole notion of good fit or chemistry which gets at recruiting issues and gets at matching issues, and we're going to be talking about that in a lot more detail in a couple of minutes.

And then, an interesting study by Kate Morgan, who actually works for our British company that Foster Caring Associates and a colleague of her, is Rachel Barron, in 2011 article, self-efficacy, this whole issue of self-efficacy. Care is a feeling like they have the skills, the abilities, the supports, the where we saw to sort of mediate the relationship between challenge and behavior and care, stress, anxiety, depression.

So, as we know, as more, as kids with more challenges and more issues enter the system, the issues around building the sort of self-efficacy of the cares themselves takes on greater and greater importance, we're going to be spending some time talking about training and support. What is that self-efficacy issue mean for the kinds of training and support that we need to be providing?

Again, Elizabeth Fernandez who with Rick Barf edited that 2010 volume about foster care, what do we know? She wrote an article about her work in Australia, where she talked about the greater the degree of cohesion between caring, young person. Again, I think a matching, a goodness of fit in the practice side, not necessarily the goodness of fit in the research side, but a goodness of fit on their practice side, a greater degree of cohesion translated into a stronger, a stronger set of pro-social behaviors on the part of the young person in care, it translated into better self-esteem.

And it translated very important, especially in terms of the commissioner's presentation this morning about thinking about developmental issues and also translated into improved emotional and behavioral developmental outcomes.

And one of the other things Dr. Fernandez looked at in her study, just that the sort of issues that nested with the foster dad, often times sort of neglected and overlooked sort of issue. The greater degree of cohesion with the foster dad appear to be fewer conduct problems, you see on the child behavior checklist, a lower externalized problem score, better peer relationship outcomes and then increased relationship building skills.

We've all had the conversation over the last set of years about the importance of dad in all kinds of family context. I think this just reinforces the notion that dad in the foster

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care, in the foster family setting is also of critical importance and critical attention. As we think about what on an appropriate research agenda ought to be.

And lastly, you know, again, Rick this morning talked a little bit about the California evidence based clearing house. Think about evidence based practice, one that I think are the more interesting programs that's identified on the – on the California clearing house, that speech to the topic of this round table, foster parents, foster care, there is this key program, being foster and kid parent support and train. It's been rated in the areas of placement stabilization and resource parent recruitment and training.

He holds a scientific rating of three, remember we talked about the one the five staff. So, it hasn't been subjected to an RCT or a really experimental sort of research endeavor but it does show promise in research evidence and it was designed again you see, why was it designed. To provide a whole set of tools, for dealing with child externalizing and other behavioral and emotional problems. And to support the care and thinking how to effectively respond to them in the short term and across the entire length of the placement, the entire time that the care opens their hearts and their homes to the youth or the adolescent in care.

Again, just some highlights to start the conversation. So, I think what we want to do at this point is going to shift gears into more involvement, more participation, sort of co-thinking, co-creation again of what, what are research agenda, what on evaluation on learning agenda around foster cares ought to be.

And I'm going to turn it back over to Chris.

Christopher Graber: As I mentioned to you, I am – I'm in the process of living – that's because I'm holding it upside down. How many social workers does it take to work a PowerPoint?

I – like I said, I'm living this, this is where I'm living right now. We started this new agency back in January, we're taking the hardest to place kids, dual diagnosis, mother-baby placements, all the placements that, you know, when you call the providers, they go, what's their IQ and you say 65 and they go, sorry, type 65. Those are the kinds of kids, because I think those are magic numbers that don't mean anything other than the kids IQ is 65, maybe if they weren't on some sort of psychotropic drug cocktail that completely whacked them out that day when they took the test.

So, anyway, there're all these false constructs that we've got out there, that we set up in our intake many times. And so, this – but the question really becomes how do you recruit the people that you need to go to school on a regular basis. Because guess what? You're going to do this, you're going to be called to school. I tell our cares all the time, it's the 70 time 7 method, how many times are you going to take them back after they wall on you? 70 times 7.

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When they get in your face and they cuss you out and of course we use all the colorful terms which I won't use here, but I'm sure you've heard them. You know, how many times are you going to take them back? And so this becomes kind of the mantra of all the people caring for us. Now, does it always work? Absolutely not and I think that's why the questions that we're putting forth are kind of important.

Like I said, I'm leaving this, so I was telling the guys at lunch today, you would think that I would have a lot of anxiety about presenting to this esteemed group of people. My anxiety is that my cellphone is right over there and I can't go get it to see if there is something going on at the office. So, just so you know if I check it, it's not, I'm not bored with you, it's more of a risk management thing for myself.

The other thing that I want to say is like I said I'm living this right now. And each week these questions get more and more refined in my life. I mean, like I said, I'm living them. I wish there were some playbook, I wish there was some research that I could go to and go, oh, Chris, this is what you need, you know, for this type of kids. Well, guess what? It doesn't exist.

So, with the incomplete – with the increasing complexity of the children or youth that are coming into care because we've got the dual diagnosis kids with DD and with a behavior disorder. We've got a mental health disorder and a substance abuse disorder, we've got all, I was looking at the list the other day of what dual diagnosis meant and it was just – it was kind of mind blowing.

Their characteristics of the young people which are in therapeutic foster care agencies must take into consideration when recruiting foster cares that will provide supports and homes to these kids. So, what are those characteristics, what are you guy's experience? You know, when you begin to think about the kids that were talking about, how do you find these people? Because in Kentucky where I live, and I think residential has its place, I'm not knocking residential.

But we've got almost 20% of our kids in care in residential a 20% of our kids in care don't need to grow up in residential placements. They need to grow up in families because guess what, they're going to need to live in communities.

And so, you know, to the largest percentage that we can get into families and into communities we need to do that. But what do you, what do you guys think about this question, what do you know, what is out there, are we missing something, that addresses this whole issue of the characteristics of cares for the deep in kids, what are your thoughts on that?

Mark Mannes: Mark even.

Christopher Graber: Does that concern anybody else, yeah, I'm going to go through these and then we can discuss them all. But on this one, I mean, anybody living here, anybody? I mean, it's a very scary question. What characteristics are you utilizing, what

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are you advising people to utilize, what are you measuring, are you doing any of this work? Yes.

Kay Hoffman: It seems of the time zone, because it's one thing but we were looking at a population of children that had been in the state institutional system. And looking at really closing that down, there is a possibility for those children? And then, trying to figure out what sort of a program what we were looking at?

And what I found was, that it was really important to help the foster parents not to think about how well will that child fit into my home? But instead look at it from a mindset of what could we do in our family to help meet this child's needs. And there is a particular person, I don't even know his first name anymore but his last name is Smalley. And he works with the developmentally disabled around getting them out of state institutional studying.

And I actually, it's called essential lifestyle planning. And he looks at what do these individuals absolutely have to have in their environment. What would it be nice if they had?

Christopher Graber: Yeah.

Kay Hoffman: And then what would they like to have? Well, just as a little project during my grad school I did that with a couple of kids in that population and did that essential lifestyle planning with them. We were able to then get parents, foster parents who were willing to be almost in a professional parenting kind of a capacity. They knew going in, everything that this child needed. And they were able to supply it, and we were basically for those couple of kids, able to keep them in a community setting with those families throughout high school. And then, they were able to transition into the adults system. And actually Mr. Smalley is totally willing to have his material and his work borrowed into the foster care system.

Christopher Graber: Well, that's you know, that's a really good point. Because it goes the harder, what we heard this morning. Wasn't that a scary statistic for those of you there, what's it take 14 years and only 17% gets translated or whatever juxtapose. I mean, that should scare the crap out of all this, I could be dead by then. You know, by the time and only 17% of what I said will get translated. So, that's – that is an awakening, I think a wake-up call for all of us. So, going someplace else where that information already exists which we did talk about this morning.

You know, what you said, ghost of the heart of the efficacy for cares. Because standing on this side and looking at the cases and the kids are out there can be a very scary place to be. But if you think about how you as a family, you know, how you as a family can adapt and change and move and Dodge and Perry, that's a really different way to spin that. So, I do think that that's a really important like I said, to the mental and disabilities to get that information and then realizing people do it all the time, it can't be done.

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You know, how do you – this is where I'm living right now, let me throw this one out. How do we identify those characteristics and how do you know you've got somebody with those characteristics when you're recruiting. I'm telling you, like I said, I practiced social work for 25 years, knocked on doors, done investigations, the whole 9 yards. But this, and maybe it's just that I'm older and wiser and liability scares the crap out of me at this point, but how do you know, you've got the right people, you know, coming through your doors, case and point. What do you think some of the motivations to foster are?

When you guys are out there and you're talking to people about why they foster, what are you hearing about people's motivations to foster? What do people say, why they're doing it? Yeah.

Speaker: Well, it's kind one issue. We have a lot of families related to foster because they can't have children of their own.

Christopher Graber: Okay.

Speaker: So, their goal is adoption. And that creates a problem when working with these biological families.

Christopher Graber: Yeah.

Speaker: They're not really encouraging the biological parents work between the plans.

Christopher Graber: Yeah, there is a little triangulation going on in many of those cases, yeah.

Speaker: Is there, end goal, I want to adopt this child even though they realize that, you know, the parent has certain timeframe to work with treatment plan and be re-unified?

Christopher Graber: Well, there is a level of entitlement too sometimes that you will see that occurs with cares that are entitled to some of these kids because they've been willing to take these kids. And that's a very, I mean, and they'll triangulate against, especially when there is a visit, oh, he came home and he was awful, he was absolutely terrible when he came home. It took us weeks to get him back into shade.

Speaker: He just came back and he's been out in the hope?

Christopher Graber: Well, in that whole concept of you saying your mother is bad, you know, she is bad news. You know, and there is whole that piece. What else, what are some other reasons people foster? Yeah.

Speaker: I think a religious conviction that they can be helpful?

Christopher Graber: On mission from god until that kid is underneath the bed threatening you with a knife and then for some reason some times that goes out the window. Yeah, I

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think reading through that religion and you know what? I do believe it's a calling. Don't get me wrong but you are willing to take a kid into your home, I mean, at some level that is you know, but yeah, the over zealousness sometimes of those families. And I'll tell you in Eastern Kentucky, it's a highly, highly religious area.

And so, honoring that without going and then drop, but the way we get around this we drop the f-bomb and training a lot and we say that. And you know, a lot of times, religiously we can't work for an organization that cusses like you cuss. So, they kind of exit stage left. But what are some other reasons, can you think of some other reasons.

Speaker: Their own life experiences?

Christopher Graber: That's where I'm living right now. I'm telling you, oh my gosh, the number of people that are motivated to do this because they had influence, been influenced by the system at that level, had been victimized and there is no playbook out there to tell you what to do when a foster parent experience is trauma echoes, and I may know, I may know that they were raped at 16 years old, as a young person and we've dealt with that, oh yes, I've dealt with that, I've gone to counseling, I've done it. But when that foster kids gets in their face and is aggressive with them, boom she's right back to being the 16-year old that was the victim.

So, dealing with those sorts of issues, it scares me to think that we might pull out people that have experiences, their past life experiences because their motivations are really, really important. But that's another area that, can you think of anything else with that, the motivations? Extended family connections, yeah.

Speaker: My cousin's kids. And I would say, extended family connects it's maybe the child of my cousin or second cousin and because they've been part of my network of family, I still feel responsible in why should we involve them.

Christopher Graber: Right, whether I want them or not?

Speaker: Right.

Christopher Graber: Somebody in the family has to got to keep them, we can't let this kid out of the family so, yeah, exactly. But again, missing big, huge, missing pieces in this whole, you know, not – the research that's being done we don't even really know the level of victimization amongst our cares. I'm going to run through a couple of more of these. When recruiting approaches, when you – what recruiting a purchase would be best when trying to engage foster families to provide homes and interventions for these complex kids, you know, I know that the diligent recruitment stuff is going on around.

Let me ask Mark right here, let me ask her just a second, back here in the black and white. What do you guys see nationally, what's coming up when you talk about these complex kids, not the cute and cuddly, you know, three year olds?

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Speaker: Well, in our diligent recruitment grant is recruiting for all the children. You know, it's hard because I feel like our approach most of the time is just to kind of try and educate them up front and then put in that education backend. But you know, you can tell someone what those behaviors are going to be and everything but it still doesn't seem to prepare them for, you know, oh okay, okay, we got it. And then, you know, we're still losing them at yearend. So, I would say, recruiting, we've just really been trying to upper education but I think it's going to have to go deeper than that ultimately.

Christopher Graber: Yes, back here.

Speaker: In terms of that diligent recruitment for the most difficult youth, that that notion of providing the training and the education upfront, so that they're well informed. But looking at it almost from a wrap around model, that the same that you would do with their actual families to prevent custody, so that the foster parents, the resource parents know that I've got a team around me.

Christopher Graber: Yeah.

Kay Hoffman: And when I've had a day of this child up in my face calling me every name in the book, I've got other people who can step in, not that I'm turning him back.

Christopher Graber: Right or that I failed.

Kay Hoffman: Not that I failed and that he also knows not that he's out of the circle of our family but this is what we've planned for. We knew that this was going to happen and we're utilizing resources to help us.

Christopher Graber: Well, think about yourself, if you've had children to just you alone, do that yourself, absolutely not. You had in-laws and parents and aunts and uncles and people that came alongside you to help you, you had basically a village to help you raise your kid. And a lot of times, these care families do not, kids don't come with networks a lot of times, we had a comment over here Mark.

Speaker: I was just going to mention that, this is really very parallel to recruitment of attention of Child Welfare workers, frontline workers. I mean, it's all the same issues that we're talking about as far as trying to identify characteristics in retention and really looking at that literature around that kind of supports education and coaching that needs to take place, it's the same thing with our foster parents.

Christopher Graber: It's a really good point.

Speaker: And the only other comment I would like to make is that – I really think we need to have foster parents in the conversation.

Christopher Graber: Absolutely.

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Speaker: So.

Christopher Graber: Is anybody, care here, is anybody foster parent here or has been. All right, oh yeah, okay, good. This is another piece and then I'll sit down and shut up. This interrelatedness between honest marketing to cares, I mean, because I think we are not, at least in my state sometimes we're not always honest with cares, well, we didn't know we'd have sex with the cat. Well, guess what? It was in his file. You know, we just neglected to tell you that at 4:30 on a Friday afternoon.

So, I think there is that honest, that honest marketing piece. But this affective matching, are there questions we need to be asking the care in the recruitment and assessment phase which will advance appropriate matching. Because you know and I work for state system and I can say this, we're not always honest at that placement about that kid. So, what can I do then from a care perspective to have that care prepared when that dishonesty may occur or there is a brand new behavior that we've not seen before that comes up in the home. So, how do you, how do you assess so that you can appropriately match? Because I think sometimes we really, we just take the available bed instead of thinking, man, if we head in this direction, this could blow up next Tuesday, we don't worry about next Tuesday. So, how can you be brief not debrief? I mean any thoughts on that.

Missy Segress: Well, I used to work residential and what I did with the families when I had to transition the kids, they always knew that these kids had bigger problems you could say but they never knew the extent.

Christopher Graber: Right.

Missy Segress: Which, is of course always the problem. And I think for me in particular, I always take the strength base perspective. Like you will see this behavior hands down, you may see new behaviors. But you know what? 60% of the time they're just a regular kid and they just want to play.

Christopher Graber: Right.

Missy Segress: And they need someone to tell them that it's okay that you're not perfect and that you'll get better and maybe you won't be a 100% but it's like that, that glimmer of hope I think helps on those rough nights when the kid is...

Christopher Graber: How you view the kid is absolutely critical?

Missy Segress: Right.

Christopher Graber: And I know in our assessment process we're going through right now, we talk about how they view kids. How do you view, when I say the term foster care, because you know foster care has got a bad rap out there, a lot of place, they're just doing it for the money. Well, you know, that maybe happening in some place I wouldn't do it for the money, I don't know if you've all checked out the rates or not that we were

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paying. But I do think we've got to get to the heart of how do you assess so that you can match appropriately, particularly for these multi-level, multi problem kind of kids that are coming to us or going to end up growing them up in facilities. All right, let me see Missy, I think you may be. Okay.

Let me just run through these real quick. Is placement stability the best outcome? I mean, I can keep a kid in a placement but is that really the best outcome for the kid and I think Brian talked a little bit about that this morning, that whole concept of matching really is. If you want a kid to thrive and grow and become all that he or she can be, maybe placement stability isn't it.

What other types of information should public agencies be asking of placement agencies when they're getting ready to place a kid not just you have an available bed, which is typically they call, I get.

And do placing agencies need to look differently at their own pre-placement needs. I'll tell you a little story, we talked about pre-placement. And I said, what are the policies on pre-placement? We used to do pre-placement. That was kind of the response I got from the agency. I said, are there policies and procedures? You know, I don't know, I'm going to have to go find those policies and procedures on pre-placement. We don't really do pre – because it's all emergency, you know, get them out, get them out, get them out.

And so, that whole concept of matching and pre-placement and creating a transition, we don't react like that or respond like that so much anymore, which is very scary place to be, we're more like an ER and we just hope that whatever without the real diagnostics that it made a difference. And one of the most pertinent assessment questions and data, we need to obtain to ensure that matching is good as it can be, that first placement, last placement. If we can get that right, we can get there. But just to say, you know, reduce the number of moves, that's not really going to do that for us. All right, yes.

Mark Mannes: A suggestion that you spend a couple of minutes, before you turn it over. Just share with folks, some of the ways briefly, some of the strategies that as Kentucky has put into place to try to deal with these issues?

Christopher Graber: Well.

Mark Mannes: We don't know if they're working or not. But some of the innovations that...

Christopher Graber: Let me just... we're trying to – we're getting at the wall right now and see what sticks. We spend in pre-placement we do at least 22 hours in the home of the care. And we intentionally say, we are going to be in your face and invasive, just know that, just know that we are going to ask you about everything. And so, I was sharing with somebody at lunch. I'm shocked at the level of brutal honesty we are getting from our cares because in a very, I think a very therapeutic way we're asking some very, very deep seeded kinds of questions.

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And we're getting that planning, and safety planning around that for that individual and that individual family. I think we need to remember too that the family fosters, not just the care givers, not just the adults in the home. And that whole birth child thing, yeah.

We do, we do a series of 11, two hour visits or we spend one-on-one. I would come and sit with you and talk to you about your experiences, we would Genogram you, we would do all the stuff that we learned to do in social work but really try and build a relationship with you. And really kind of a therapeutic relationship with you talking about past victimization if there was any experience with kids, I would ask your birth children questions, what was it like to have her as a mom, tell me about that.

So, we're trying to engage, we engage the family, neighbors, talk to your neighbors about. And all this is with permission, I mean, people still, and like, wow, people will actually do this. But free licensing, and then, we have about 22 hours of training, you know, classroom kind of training. But by the time you get to training, I really feel like you know, I know you and you feel like you know me. And then we continue that relationship on. But I was saying at lunch that I felt like it was sometimes brutally honest and that honesty between the two of us was a really good thing because then you could say, I'm having a really bad day, can you come out. And I know, if you say that to me, you mean it. And so, we go.

Now, does that work all the time well so far, it's worked with about seven or eight that we got. And we're just like I said, we're just 10 months into this and we have eight families that we're working with right now. But they'll tell you how refreshing the process is. And at the very least, we leave at better than we found it when we went in, because we've hooked them up with resources that they may need because of their own personal situation.

But the, let me say something about the birth children real quick. Birth children have to be engaged and involved with this process. They, we kind of ignore them and go on. So, whatever you do for the foster, the kid in foster care, you need to do for the birth child as an agency. I think that's really, really important that that you know, you get a worker too.

The worker comes out and asks you how your day was and talks to you about those sorts of things, and that's a very, it's kind of a – it's kind of a position change but we even have our kids, all of our kids gets flip cameras, we take them out and they give the virtual tour of the home and they narrate the virtual tour of the home that we bring back and download so that we can do in cases where we don't have pre-placement opportunities, we can do a virtual pre-placement and it's online.

But it's narrated by the person's birth child. This is your bedroom, this is our dog, this is my grandma and grandpa and they come over every Thursday night for dinner. And so, that there is a sense of ownership in the placement. So, in addition to safety planning and all those things, we try and do some of the good stuff too with the birth children, all right.

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Speaker: If you are using a particular model in your assessment at the foster care?

Christopher Graber: There is, we've got a very structured model that we utilize that literally, like I said, there is Genograms, it's sectioned often to safety and risk. And it's – like I said, it's very – the questions are very – they're very set out and they're very. But what the questions do is they open into questions. When we get an assessment done on cares, okay, about 250 pages single, I mean, one sided, all of our cares files come in initially sometimes thicker than some of our kids.

But we also then know enough to be able to – it helps us with the matching piece. And what we're finding is they aren't able to say to the department on a Friday afternoon, I've got a home where there is this and this and this occurring. Do you have a kid that would fit? And then, what the department is saying to me is, I've got a kid that's coming out of residential in two months, could you find me a family that's willing to deal with an Encopretic 15-year old boy who is sometimes violent, could you find somebody like that in our community. Well, then that gives me something when I stand up and talk to cares, let me give you an example of.

And so, it really, it needs to be a symbiotic relationship with the department to so often those relationships are really the department and the agencies are not really very comfortable relationships. So, again, that honesty with the department and calling upon, I was at child protective services worker, so I know – you know, I know after they've lied to me. But I can call them on, I can say, wait a minute, you know, you just blew smoke. So, again that honest relationship, honesty and maybe honesty is not the right word but openness is really, really, really critical.

And I think that our cares and the people that we're recruiting, and the department are finding that very refreshing. So, I think that's key in this. I don't know how that plays in and how you measure it but I do think getting a hold of that somehow, somehow, that we're so good at relationships as profession. But we don't apply it where we need to apply it so often. And it goes to the heart of the parallel process with the workers. You know, we missed the boat and supervision, we don't treat our workers the way we treat other people and so they go home and kick the dog.

So, I really do think it's absolutely critical that we get a hold of the relationship nature of this work, so, anyway that's my two-sense, Miss.

Mark Mannes: Okay.

Kay Hoffman: Well, he is a hard act to follow up. Chris and I have worked together through the years because he was before Missy, the director of our training resource center at U.K. And so, this relationship that he's had with the state, with our state agency, you know, kind of helped me develop a better relationship between the university and the state agency.

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But I think that what is so interesting again, so many things that are interesting about what Chris has said is that and the challenge is how do we capture all of this, you know, how do we capture what they're doing. That may or may not turn out to be what we think it will turn out to be, we don't know. But we would sure like to capture so that it can be recreated or regenerated in other settings. So, I think that's really important. Where is that little particular thing?

Okay, so, Missy and I are going to talk about a little bit about – how do you do this? Okay, about support and training of foster parents. And again, we have – you know, many years experience in our resource center, doing training then I think Missy will back me up on this at least in our experience, is that this university state partnership is obviously a really important one.

But we – sometimes we don't know what a good university partnership is, perhaps relative to what an effective partnership is. And part of it is because each of us is sort of feeding to each other, I mean, I hate to be kind of blunt about this but we each need each other and not always for the right reasons. So, we try to dig into it a little bit more about what really good training might be.

And based upon and then use some of the questions you know, that we have – that have been uncovered in the research about what really might help foster parents be affected and take care of the children, that they, to whom they are assigned. So, we have a series of questions that I'm going to ask Missy to go through and then, I think the way, I think the way, maybe we want to do it is to go through the questions and then, ask you to participate and help us with these questions. These are just questions about what – how we could improve training. And you have some things to say about what we're doing now.

Missy Segress: And the thing, one of the reasons, one of the most important reasons we want to go through on the questions is to let you know kind of where our thinking is about – at the training resource center and within our state. Because as Kay said, you know, we have that partnership that university state partnership, I think there is lot of good things about it but at the same time, it can be limiting in that, you kind of get in the routine of doing things and everybody does things a certain way.

But part of what we want to do is be more innovative and how we're thinking about training and not do the same things as we have done for 30 years just because that's the way we've done it for 30 years. I mean, there is more to be done.

So, if we could go through these questions, kind of give them some thought, and then we will also want to hear what you think about these questions but also other questions that you might have. So, anything you want to add would be really good.

So, first, one of the things that really relates, a lot back to recruitment and managing is the idea of connectedness and attachment. And you know, those foster parents who they

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just have it, you don't really teach it, they just, they are, they can do that, they could do that with all kinds of kids. But unfortunately those are sometimes few and far between.

So, one of the things we want to know is can you and if you can how might you teach, can you train them, can you teach a foster parent to be connected? How to connect with a child? How to form attachment with a kid that's in care? So, we're really interested in can that be done? Is it something you can teach or do you just have it? And then, if you – we think we can teach it, how do you do that? How do you get them to learn how to connect with some of the most difficult kids who quite honestly most of us would say, I don't want them in the room with me, no longer in my house. You know, and they look at you like, I hate you, I mean, so, that's hard.

Another area that we're really interested and I think this comes, I'm sure a lot of you have the same things going on in your state. But particularly in Kentucky there is a lot of discussion around professionalizing foster care so, really looking at this, as a professional career for folks. However there are a lot of negative aspects that go with that. One of them being, are we starting to pull back from attach, you know, does that limit the attachment?

Kay Hoffman: Just the very opposite of what we know needs to be tried. Those questions really have not been answered in research and certainly have not been implemented in training.

Missy Segress: Absolutely, that's not something at least in where we are – in Kentucky we're talk a lot about. So, is there a way to sort of negate those more negative aspects professionalizing foster care and how can we do that through training and support?

Moving on just a little bit, and thinking about the different stages that cares go through, especially those cares, foster parents who spend a lot of time in any system. As they move through that, they become more experienced, perhaps become more cynical and really become less sensitive to some of the things they were in the beginning. How does that change their training needs?

So, if you look at foster care and across sort of as a life cycle of fostering, how does that change what you need to do as you train these folks. Just, when you come into fostering and what you need to know in the first day, two to five years is quite different if you've been doing it for 10 years. So, right now I think as far as training and support goes, we don't give that a lot of thought. We have a certain training curriculum in place. And whether you've been doing it two years or you've been doing it 20 years, that's what we teach you every year.

So, I think there is a lot of room to think about how does that change across the life span of a foster parent's career and fostering.

And this is a little bit more Katie, do you want to talk a little bit about this?

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Kay Hoffman: Yeah, we have been sort of tossing this idea around that. I mean, if we're interested in the lifecycle of people, why wouldn't we put that to use in how we train foster cares. So, does the actual age of people, I mean, do older people have different wants and needs. And are they able to do certain things that younger people are not able to do and vice versa. But our training for sure in Kentucky does not take into account someone's chronological age less – let alone the years that they have in service.

Missy Segress: I think it also speaks to a little bit of Chris, you guys were talking about earlier, which is people's motivations to foster. And then, typically your motivation to foster is different depending on your life, where you are in your own life. So, I think the chronological age could have a lot to do with that as well. Let's see...

This again, I think it relates to training but also more support so we're kind of moving from training to also providing those supports and that is can get foster cares to become more fully engaged in the community and the resources that are out there. So, that they have that. And so, again like Chris was describing that village that we want to help people build as they're taking care of these kids, but we need them to engage more fully in that community to be able to do that more readily.

And this again, speaks to support. And the kinds of support that our foster cares need, peer support, professional support, and does this change depending on where they are, like we were talking about where they are in their foster caring careers, where are they in their own lives, what kind of support do they need and do we assess that well, do we look at that, do we think about that.

And in Kentucky, we have a lot of great supports in place. But at the same time, they are what they are. They don't – they are not – they're very static, yeah, they're not very dependant on what folks have going on right at that moment.

Kay Hoffman: And also, they don't take into account the actual context of community in which the cares come from. So, we have diverse communities that contextually and we're beginning to understand I think in research at least the importance of the social context when it comes to doing something effective for people but you know, let me just save it for example.

In education, we know that educational research that doesn't take into account context doesn't mean very much. But our research and foster parenting or foster cares, we really haven't looked at context. So, what is caring for a child in Eastern Kentucky about where there are really diminished community resources? Where there is a lot of huge issues what does that look like differentiated to a city like Lexington Kentucky that has almost everything that a person could want, you see. So, we don't look at that very carefully.

Missy Segress: Then lastly, what are the things we're very interested in is looking at the developmental well-being, and the development of kids, who are in our care? And what can we do to help foster parents promote that development of well-being. Not only that but also what kind of information the agencies, the placing agencies need to know that

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will increase the stability of these placements in the developmental success of these kids in care.

So, what is it that we need to do to promote that development of well-being because quite honestly right now, we're not doing a very good job of it? We are so, so we sort of look that in many ways. And look at some, in my opinion, artificial outcomes rather than a developmental long-term well-being of these kids.

So, that's – and now sort of a quick run-through but we're most interested in hearing what – what do you guys think about these things in terms of, what's going on in terms of training and support where you are? And are you seeing some of the similar things with regard to being static and what ideas you have for changing that?

I'm sorry I don't think I have an idea. But I do have a question. Hearing all of you speak I wonder about how are you considering culture and all of this, so the cultural considerations are families and the match and that's very complicated.

Speaker: Kind of absolutely.

Missy Segress: Absolutely.

Speaker: So, I think you might be able to talk about the just in the more innovative, yeah.

Kay Hoffman: I'm sorry, yeah. Okay, yeah.

Missy Segress: We need to work on our talk show...

Kay Hoffman: But you might want to talk about that for a minute. Because I do think that this innovative program that they're doing does take into account culture in a thoughtful and upfront way whereas I do not think, I mean, I know that the training that we participate in through our, it doesn't, it may have a, you know, sort of broad stroke.

Missy Segress: Yeah, it has a cultural component but it's very much a sort of segment, a component about culture versus it being weighed throughout what we do.

Kay Hoffman: Yeah.

Missy Segress: And I think in Kentucky, especially in Eastern Kentucky, like Chris was saying, you know, we have sort of a span of cultures like most states do but we also have that appellation, Eastern Kentucky culture which is a very different thing as well.

Kay Hoffman: Yes. But I think at the same time, you know, there are lots of trainings that have culture in them but they really turn out to be kind of stereotypical. I happen to have in my own head try to move away from that concept and think more about context which I think has – is richer describer of what people are living with and around, you

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know, because culture takes on different paths and different means, depending on where it is and how engaged people are with whatever that culture is, you know.

Mark Mannes: I think the other piece of this and I don't know that I've given an answer. But I can say, the other piece is that the kids culture. You know, we've got the cares culture and the kids culture because the kids in Eastern Kentucky doesn't necessarily mean he's got the same culture as the cares. Because we had the overlays of trauma, we've had the overlays of maybe poverty, maybe really extreme poverty which has a culture with it as well.

And so, I think, I think the important thing is knowing enough about it to be able to talk about what you might see but also talking with the cares, the potential cares, the particular level of comfort with it, what is intolerable to you and, getting to know them on that level. Because sometimes they'll identify things that are contextual in nature and not realize that they're doing that, and so I'm going to know that I can't put a kid like that in that home right now anyway until I deal with their issues around context.

So, again, it goes back to the heart of what really makes you uncomfortable and what, where do you feel the most comfortable, sexuality, you know, Eastern Kentucky, do you know we have no homosexuals in Kentucky? But we will have cares that will say to us right out of the box. Well, you know, we can't take the gay or lesbian kids, I'm like, okay.

You know, does that cut them out from being a care? Well, maybe not. But I certainly am not going to set a kid that's questioning their sexuality up to being a home, where and it goes the religiosity and all those things we talked about, where it's not going to – the kid's not going to be appreciated for who he or she is, or who they're trying to or who they aspire to be.

So, I think you know, the overlays of culture, I mean, you've got to ask the questions to get to the responses so at least you have a roadmap so you don't do anything obviously wrong. I mean, that's – I guess, that's kind of how bad it is, we're trying not do anything obviously wrong. Because we don't really have a roadmap to tell us what is literally right.

So, you know, I find myself going okay, what's the least of two evils here, what's the worst that can happen here. And running all these strategies with the team, to say, okay, then we can't and you know, what, it's really hard being a brand new agency because there are kids we can't take because I know culturally they can't go into that home. I know they can't because that kid's never gone to church in his life and by god that's the center of that care's whole world. So it becomes a problem.

Missy Segress: I'm just wondering how you're addressing, not just cares that are going to care for children, but really cares that are going to care for families, that are really going to support the birth family to reunify or to make a decision that they can't?

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Christopher Graber: Again, upfront the kids that we have, about 50% of them return to parent is the goal. And you know, even the kids that have been terminated, their goals return to parent. So, you know, I think it becomes really, really critical in the discussion with the care that you say, no triangulation and have that discussion with them about the fact that, you know, what? You're mom and dad could have been the worst people in the world but guess what? They're still your mom and dad.

And so, I mean, really knowing that in your soul, but we say it to care to get up front, how comfortable in the assessment process, how comfortable would you feel having Sally's mom and dad come to your house at Thanksgiving. Now, he's maybe drunk when he gets there. You know, and really running some of those things are, the reality is like somebody said, and this is so true. Until it hit you, you really don't know you can think, oh well, of course we would be a very nice family. And but when they come in, they ruin Thanksgiving, you know, because they, they are obnoxious or whatever it's a different story.

But I think you have to at least call the question and have the discussion and people say, I'm willing to do that, I'm willing to coach, I'm willing to mentor and not triangulate and not talk badly about. Now, you got to have, you got to have a plan for what happens when they do. But I think realistically, all I can do is give you that and I can bring your kids to talk about how much it mean to them that their foster care has never talked badly about their family.

That's really, really important so, but I think you have to tell them that's part of the job, its part of the work. What else, you have something back there Mark.

Speaker: Something that's really helped up with getting foster parents to mentor families is some of them that really do have that calling and wanted to do the caring part that you're talking about that really, you know, that we don't have to teach or we don't know if we have to teach. Is that, when we tell them, that if you do this, you know, a lot of times it leads to even after the case is closed and the children are reunified, that ongoing relationship, that there seem to be a lot more willing to do it.

Because, you know, it maybe they do initially think, oh, we went to adopt this kid. But when you kind of frame it as, we're asking you to be a resource for that child for whatever that child needs, but hopefully if it's done right, you're a permanent connection for that kid whether they go home or not, a lot of them are really assuming to embrace that.

The other thing I wanted to comment on was as far as training and when they get training, with the grant, the diligent recruitment grant, we have surveyed resource families and asked them some demographic information upfront about how long they've been a resource care and those sorts of things. And then really dug into what kind of training they thought they needed more of. And we identified five major trainings that we're developing both online and in a video or a DVD format if they don't have access to computers.

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And now, we're in the process because we're finishing up those. We're in the process of defining – some of them are going to be mandatory in their first year, we'd have 12 hours required of in-service after the 27th pre-service. So, we have kind of a curriculum for the first year, the second year that we're working on. And then, the way that we're doing it is the resource workers will be responsible in their re-assessment for identifying and assigning what their next in-service training will be. So, whether they're, it's based on their needs or whether it ends up being based on the types of children they're taking into their home.

Speaker: [Indiscernible question from participant].

Speaker: I can identify the five trainings that we're doing, our psychotherapy medication, legal, kind of navigating the court system, intentional visitation, trauma informed care and then kind of for the very, very new families, the Hamburg contract because our contract – you know, lot of them don't really understand the contract or that language and so really kind of doing that hand holding. So, some of them are for the first year, and some of them are for the second year and then, we're going to start making – making those re-assessments really dependent on identifying where they go from there.

Speaker: I think that speaks a great deal to sort of what's going on across the country then because those five things, with the exception – you know, little bit of tweaking on the last one. Those, you almost said word for word, the topics that we're looking at and on our own state. And I think that, that just picks a great deal to what we're all kind of looking at and facing in regards to training.

But also, I think looking at it across like you were saying the lifespan of the cares were first, is whoever kind of helping to move within the training, we're doing in terms of individualizing and especially like you said, kind of past year too. Because what we've heard foster parents study is, what Chris sort of just referenced is I didn't realize it was going to be this way. When I was going – yeah, when I was sitting there before I had a kid placed in my home and you were telling me all this stuff, I know you told me but I thought that won't be the kid that I get. You know, I won't be able to – you know, I'll be able to do it differently.

And so, it's only after having a couple of placements at least that they come back and say, hey, I need you to retell me that.

Kay Hoffman: Which I think what Missy is saying and I think everybody here would agree is the training without support is sort of for not and you can have the best training. But if you don't have the ongoing support, I think the other, another research question is as methodologically, in other words, what's the best way of training. And I do think that we have fallen into huge traps about using the same old, same old. And then, also believing that somehow technology is going to save us and I sort of doubt it will.

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Speaker: I didn't note about the support for foster parents. I know in Georgia, there is a – at least at one point in time when I was in Georgia, there was a program that had begun for mentoring foster parents. And it was – you know, a group of parents who had been you know, foster parents, you know, mentors these new parents. And that really works with the community, so get resources outside of the foster care system like, you know, that CiCi's Pizza, if you have such and such card, you get a discount for the kid, bringing your kids or going to the skating ring.

Kay Hoffman: Yeah.

Speaker: Or things like that where it's, you know, mainly that might be a little bit out of your reach. But you know, financially, but you still want these kids to have as normalized as possible.

Speaker: And we actually have a state-wide mentor program that's just what you described that are really season, kind of veteran foster parents who then mentor newly foster parents. And really try to work to get them entrenched in the community before they have that placement, so you, like you said, they can go in and explore what those supports are in the community. But then, most importantly, like I was saying, once they have that child's placement, they have somebody they can call. They have somebody who's been there, who's not a worker, who's not a trainer, who's just – I have been there, done that, let me give you let me give you some advice.

Kay Hoffman: I think the thing that it's following up on that remark I think one of the hardest things about parenting period but for me certainly parenting children I didn't have at birth is the problem solving aspect of it. I mean, it's constant, it's exhausting, it's mentally exhausting and it gets harder as they get older, you don't, you know, it's not physically exhausting anymore because you don't have to change their diapers but you got to constantly be trying to psyche out what you should be doing to get ahead of them or how you're going to respond or how you're not going to respond which is probably the absolutely the most important thing.

But I think that's what we really don't have and it follows up with the mentoring and whether there can be a relationship with an agency where you can admit how that, things are bad so that you can get help. Because I think it's I have seen very few of those kinds of relationships. But we certainly found, you know, when the children had therapist at the beginning actually it didn't work out but children have therapist because we needed so much of the therapist's time in terms of parenting.

Missy Segress: Yeah.

Kay Hoffman: You know, just talking about like this is what happened, what did we do?

Missy Segress: Right.

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Kay Hoffman: And I would guess the only other thing I would say in terms of what you're – you said that term what's not obviously wrong. I think that's the essence in some way of parenting because nobody knows what's absolutely right, it's you try not to do what's obviously wrong.

Christopher Graber: I have that on my wall, parenting, just try not to teach them anything obviously wrong. And that's kind of the motto. You know one of the things about that whole admitting when you're wrong, it goes back to what she said about the social workers and we talked about that this morning. Supervisors are key to social workers admitting, oh my gosh I don't know what about this family, you're right, it's a parallel process, that a window opened for me when you said that. And it's really, really true.

We're sitting around just so you know a sign-up sheet to get your e-mail and we will send you all the notes and the proceedings because we don't want this discussion to end here. And we think it's really, really important that we continue this discussion and keep it on somebody's radar screen and you guys have lots of networks and that's really, really critical.

Mark Mannes: More to the point it will be on the – it'll be on our website. At the end we'll put the last slide we'll have all our addresses, we'll have the links so you'll be able to access that. And we'll send you a signal when it's available so you can go grab it, we'll summarize and synthesize all of the stuff. Let's take one more and then we want to maybe open it to general.

Speaker: I was just going to say, everyone laughed when we said just don't do anything wrong. But I think often times we are setting our foster families to do wrong things, because they aren't walking with enough information to know how to handle problems, I can't tell you how many times I've seen families that I know the record, I know what was wrong with the child but the family had no idea and so, they enter the home, they have some very severe sexual behavior problems or the problems, and we did not equip the families with how to deal with it. And so, often times they do make wrong decisions. And so, I think we laughed but I think it's an important issue.

Speaker: Now Mark, you wanted to open it up now for more general discussion?

Mark Mannes: We – to get things going, we try to have some conversation focused on the whole recruitment and matching because we do think that's critical piece. And we also, we also try to spend a little bit of time on the training and support. What I found interesting about the conversation was how many of the issue identified on recruitment and matching don't go away but get sustained and have to be continually dealt with addressed in different ways as you move through training and support. So, it's very interesting. So the conversation reminded me of that.

But we don't want our agenda sort of limit the discussion here about what a – what sort of the next generation of research about foster cares ought to be, so we wanted to spend the last 10 minutes or so opening it up to folks for other areas that you think we didn't

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discuss so far that you think are critical. And we'd be remised if we left this session and didn't raise any of them. So, the floor is open to folks.

Kay Hoffman: Something I'm really interested in and it's an offshoot of this but it's something we don't often want to talk about. But you know, when we look at maltreatment, we're looking at confirmed abuse and neglect. And most states are going to lessened definition such that when a report comes in about children in foster care, for the most part, if you look at the state, unless there is something that really obviously sounds that could substantiate it at the get go, it's being screened out to, well, that's a licensing issue. And then, the state has to follow up.

And I'm really interested in at that point what are the things that could be done that moves that situation that relationship of the kids in care, that cares to be able to move from having those situations that are licensing kind of issues that are about the relationship where it's really maltreatment kinds of things and they need training and support to be able to move from that place to a place where they can do healthy parenting and we don't lose them in the process. Because they obviously had a heart ford at the beginning but they are struggling. They need help. And I think if you're going to be able to address, you know, the fact that we have so much turnover and you know, we've got to be able to dig into that kind of question.

Speaker: I agree, I mean, that's a really courageous question. Because it leaves everybody open, you know, to lots of problems that might come. But I think it, I would agree that we certainly, we just throw them away, yeah so.

Speaker: I'll make sure about that. When looking at maltreatment, at the decision point regarding allocations, can we move towards asking or transitioning about healthier parenting instead of just making it licenser issue, did that capture? Okay.

Speaker: Just picking up on that point. I think we've lost the art of calling it simple really. I can remember a situation and you tell from the accent, I'm from the U.K. I can remember a situation managing a fostering team where it was known that the standards of hygiene in the house were not good. Foster care, Heart of Gold managed the children beautifully, managed the birth family fantastically. But nobody wanted to address the issues around the kitchen and the bathroom and all of the stuff because people had lost the art of actually straight talking. So, I decided to go out and do it myself.

And then, I went in and I just said, about the same person's name but – it's a small world, maybe in your program. But I just said, look, you know, there is a problem. We cannot have the children living in this environment because actually it's bordering on a similar environment that we have taken them from. You are not abusing the children physically which the birth family had. But the environmental issues are causing problems. How can we help?

And what ensued after that was a realization that she had upper game and she did. And it meant that the work and afterwards could then talk about it because I had raised the

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elephant in the room. You know, you talked earlier about honesty, I think it's transparency, you know, and as workers, we can't joint families. When it goes well, it's collusiveness sometimes that can creep in because there is a comfortable place, but there is a dangerous dynamics that goes along with that too.

Speaker: One area, I'd like to see some delving into because we see it happening across the country and all the foster parent groups that we work with is this, the interaction between foster parents and the case worker. And often times how poor that relationship is, sometimes in both directions, both parties bear some responsibility in how those interactions deteriorate or don't occur. But it seems to be almost a universal issue that no one has really grappled with. I think also it is in part an issue of organizational culture because number of areas where we've done advocacy there is no commitment at the leadership level that filters down to the line worker about the importance of their interaction and their relationship with foster parents.

Missy Segress: I think that's critically important and something that we see a lot. I don't think just in Kentucky but in a lot of places, like you said that, it's on both sides. And without training on either side, it becomes, it becomes this stand-off. And so, I think really working towards that open communication and relationship building is important for both foster parent training but especially I would argue on the staff side.

Christopher Graber: Let me just say, one of the things that I think is so critical about that is we expect them to do next to saving children from dyeing in the CPS world, caring for children not have been given to us as an organization, it's the second probably most important thing we do and yet the cares are the ones doing it, the foster parents are the ones doing it. And we so, just so, brassily brushed them aside. And they feel that.

And you know what, I found in talking to groups of cares, that I think it's just so fascinating, they're not asking for much. I mean, all they want is somebody to go, yeah, oh my gosh, you know, why don't we try this or why don't we try that, to feel like they're not completely out there on an island by themselves. I mean, I just think it's one of the richest things, one of the – as a CPS worker that you can – that can be one of the best relationships you have all day long. So, I think you're right.

Kay Hoffman: I just wanted to say two things if I can have to two bits of your attention. I wanted to tag on to the conversation about maltreatment in the foster home. In North Carolina, we struggled with the idea that foster parents seemed to be being held to a higher standard. Foster parents would sign a contract with the agency saying, we will not use corporate punishment. And as a consultant, I was staffing with the investigators who are doing these assessments and they wanted to find or substantiate abuse or neglect for any kind of corporate punishment.

And so, we started dealing with staffing with them saying you cannot hold the foster parent to a higher standard. If this is something you would substantiate on or find, if a biological parent and a biological child fine. But then, you've got a second time, you look at the case and say, we're there, what we call licensing issues. And we ask them to

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make a list of those concerns and send it to the supervising agency so they can get a corrective action plan. So, what is found in the assessment can be a really important piece of that I think. So, that's where the dichotomy happens for us.

The other thing I wanted to ask for us to maybe look at as a program administrator for a number of years, my supervisors have come to me and everything was always wonderful with all of our foster parents. And eventually – I just never got any bad news. And eventually I sat them down and I said, well, how come we have so many disruptions. And so, my – I guess my question for us to look at is, you know, do we have a process for looking at disruptions, do we have an exit conference, do we have a way of training foster, fostering families, cares to have permission to come to us when they feel that it's going that direction.

Speaker: I don't have an answer I have just a question in terms of the things. And I still keep getting stuck on those numbers that just popped up earlier in terms of 20% turnover in an annual basis, the length of time of some people being foster parents being less than a length of time that children are even in care – in care, so of course you're going to have naturally that they're going to be experiencing disruptions of some sort if you just use that statistics in terms of the sorts of things.

And then, the questions that you kind of ended up bringing in up in terms of okay, can we do training based on the other grey hairs versus the 20-year old who has more energy, you know, hi, I'm the grey hair now. And I've got a six year old and sometimes I wonder what the – what am I doing. But the piece that – so there is part of it, that sort of sit there and go, gee, that's a lucky question that you're asking in terms of that sort of things to think that you even have foster parents who are, have been with you four or five years of time looking at his statistics in terms of sort of things. So, what makes them hang in?

Speaker: I don't know if this is necessarily a research question but it is something that used to drive me crazy when I was in the field. But this and it is something that is extremely important. The whole balance of confidentiality and privacy and I mean that we get terrible mix on all of that. And you're talking about getting more in the community, I mean, it's just, it is a huge issue and I don't know that it's necessarily a research issue. But it's certainly I think an issue that I'd like to know how you all address or your discussion on that, not here but you know, in the future discussions.

Speaker: One other issue to that is very important to me and it's the concept of redundant systems. And that in this place of fewer resources both human resources and financial resources, a lot of systems will want to say well, this is your role, when you go into work with the family. This is your role when you go to visit the child that you're responsible for in placement. And they want to separate out so that people aren't doing the same things.

And what I would argue based on just my history is with Child Welfare, is that this is not unlike the redundant systems that they put in place with, you know, any kind of like rocket science or whatever to prevent those catastrophic situations, in Child Welfare this

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is the same thing. There are times when there need to be redundant systems in place that can support so that a multitude of workers are giving the same message and making the same observations and going back to the agency and talking about what they're seeing, so that we can work with those families again to make sure that their kids are being taken care of and the kids that are in placement are being taking care of, that sort of thing. And I don't think we addressed that as the Child Welfare System.

Mark Mannes: And one more, and then we're up against our time limit unfortunately. We'll stick around if folks want to stick around, but we know people might have other time obligations.

Speaker: I think there is a tension, so many of the youth that I have worked with over the years and talked to truly believe that their foster parents do it for the money. And yet, we are very low to believe and nobody mentioned when we talked about reasons for foster parenting that people do it for the money. And I really don't have anything to say about that other than confusion and wondering are the kid's perception solely based upon, you know, their inability to believe that someone would want to take care of them because – if they weren't related to them, you know? Or you know, is there something where inherently paying people to take care of kids has a negative impact on that child's self-esteem.

Kay Hoffman: You know, I don't think we do address that but I think that if you look back in the literature, all kinds of literature, but I'm going to say about literature about women. If women are stay at home mothers, and they feel like they don't get any resources for themselves, you know, that somehow their labor is not worth anything that unless you can put that upfront and say, you know what? You are actually contributing hugely to the well-being of this family and you deserve money. Why wouldn't a parent deserve money?

I know I think we do need to take that out of some sort of an evil context and say, everybody deserves to be paid for things that they do, what's so wrong about that, so I'm with you. But I don't think we talk about it much.

Mark Mannes: We have sort of reached our time limit for this session. We'll stick around for a couple of moments, folks I want to raise something to get on the flip chart to add. We will make sure we do that. Again, I would like to thank all of you for your engagement, your participation. We certainly accomplished what we hoped would happen with some good conversations, some good dialogue. I have all of your e-mail addresses. And we will give you a signal when all of this material has been put together. And that we will give you – remind you about the websites where you can go to sort of access that information.

Thanks again. I hope this was thought provoking and opened up some ideas and issues or remind you of some important ideas and issues.