



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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May 27, 2009

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #219

Foster Parent Training (DCF -- Children and Families)

[LFB 2009-11 Budget Summary: Page 147, #14]

CURRENT LAW

Foster Parent Training. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) has established a voluntary foster parent educational program for all individuals licensed to operate foster homes. However, implementation of this program depends on funding available for foster parent training. As part of this program: (a) DCF, working with appropriate foster parent groups and county departments of human/social services, conducts and maintains an inventory of resources for foster parent training and periodically assesses the training needs of foster parents; (b) a statewide advisory committee appointed by DCF and representing county departments, foster parents, vocational-technical education, the university system, disability and special interest groups, and DCF studies the needs and resources and advises DCF on specific training needs; (c) DCF approves training materials, courses, and workshops for foster parents and coordinates statewide, regional, and local training programs to prevent duplication of efforts; (d) persons preparing or presenting materials for foster parent training must present educational and experiential credentials that indicate their expertise in the subject matter as well as an ability to communicate their knowledge; (e) foster parents' expenses for transportation and child care in connection with training are reimbursed by DCF and fees for course materials, trainers, and preparation of materials are paid by DCF; and (f) training is responsive to demonstrated needs of foster parents, is planned and executed based on adult education principles, and depends on the educational background and sophistication of foster parents.

In addition, DCF may authorize a licensing agency to establish and implement its own pre-licensing and post-licensing training requirements for applicants and foster parents who have applied to the licensing agency for a foster home license. A licensing agency is a county department or a licensed private child-placing agency that issues foster home or treatment foster home licenses. DCF is also considered a licensing agency.

No funding was provided for this program in 2008-09.

Treatment Foster Parent Training. A licensing agency provides or arranges for initial and ongoing training for treatment foster parents assigned to children receiving treatment foster care. Training is provided at no cost to the treatment foster parents. Initial training occurs before or after licensure but prior to the placement of the first child in a treatment foster home and consists of a minimum of 18 hours of orientation and training (no more than four hours total for orientation) approved by the licensing agency. Orientation is provided by the licensing agency. Initial training: (a) is related to the general care and support needs of the children to be placed in the home and to the specific care needs of each child to be placed in the home; (b) received more than one year prior to the application for an initial treatment foster home license is not considered; (c) is recorded and maintained in written documentation by the licensing agency for each treatment foster parent that receives training; (d) includes the etiology and general manifestations of conditions children in the home are likely to possess and crisis response to those manifestations (such as separation and loss and victimization issues).

Ongoing training consists of a minimum of 24 hours of training in the second 12-month period following licensure and 18 hours of training in every subsequent 12-month period. The providing agency (a county department, a private child-placing agency, or other human services agency responsible for providing day-to-day services for a child in treatment foster care) develops a written training plan with each treatment foster parent that is designed to meet the specific needs of that treatment foster parent with respect to the children placed in that treatment foster home. Ongoing training includes the etiology and general manifestations of conditions children in the home are likely to possess and crisis response to those manifestations (such as the emotional factors involved in caring for and supporting a child and assisting children to be part of the family, community, and treatment planning). In addition, the providing agency may require a treatment foster parent to receive up to eight hours of additional training annually if the agency deems it appropriate and necessary to ensure a child's treatment plan is implemented effectively.

Currently, training for foster parents and treatment foster parents is provided at the local level. Although there are some minimum standards for training, local child welfare agencies use a variety of curricula that may not be consistent.

Child and Family Services Review. In August, 2003, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) conducted a comprehensive review of Wisconsin's child welfare program. DHHS conducted this federal child and family services review (CFSR) in all 50 states over a three-year period. All 50 states failed some portion of the review. The CFSR is an examination of a state's conformance with federal requirements under Titles IV-B (general child welfare) and IV-E (foster care/out-of-home placements) of the federal Social Security Act. The review examined 14 aspects of the state program, including seven outcome measures relating to safety, permanency, and wellbeing of children, and seven systemic factors relating to the overall capacity of the state program to serve children and families.

Overall, DHHS determined that Wisconsin was not in substantial conformance with six of the seven outcome factors and with four of the seven systemic factors. One of these systemic factors incorporated an assessment of the state's new caseworker training program, ongoing training for child welfare agency staff, and training for foster and adoptive parents. The review found that the state was not in compliance with this standard due, in part, to the failure to have state mandated training for foster parents, either before placement or ongoing, which resulted in some counties where foster parents received minimal training prior to having children placed in their homes.

DHHS will conduct another CFSR in April, 2010. If that review finds that the state is still in nonconformance, DHHS can assess financial penalties against the funds received by the state under Titles IV-B and IV-E.

If a penalty is assessed, it is assessed against a pool of federal funds that includes a state's Title IV-B award and 10% of a state's Title IV-E claims for administrative costs in the years subject to penalties. For each item for which a state is found to be in nonconformance, a 1% penalty (approximately \$130,000) could be assessed against the pool of federal funds and continue until the state comes into conformance. The penalty increases to 2% and then 3% per item if nonconformance continues following subsequent federal reviews.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$402,500 (\$275,700 GPR and \$126,800 FED) in 2009-10 and \$705,000 (\$482,900 GPR and \$222,100 FED) in 2010-11 to require training for foster parents in the care and support needs of children who are placed in foster care. The mandatory training requirements would take effect January 1, 2010. Federal funding consists of reimbursements under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act.

Require DCF to promulgate rules prescribing the training that is required for foster parents and to monitor compliance with the rules. Require DCF to submit the proposed rules to the Legislative Council staff no later than the first day of the seventh month beginning after the bill's general effective date.

Authorize DCF to implement emergency rules, prior to the implementation of the permanent rules taking effect, without submitting evidence that the emergency rules are necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, safety, or welfare, or a finding of emergency.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. The systemic factor regarding staff and provider training under the CFSR incorporated an assessment of the state's new caseworker training program, ongoing training for child welfare agency staff, and training for foster and adoptive parents. The CFSR found that the state was not in compliance with this standard. In Wisconsin, training is provided by the state,

counties, training partnerships, tribes, and universities. The CFSR found that this network did not ensure that newly hired caseworkers in all child welfare agencies received the initial training necessary to provide services to support state program goals and federal policy requirements. In addition, the CFSR found that many newly hired caseworkers were assigned caseloads before completing a training program, and that there were not statewide requirements for staff to participate in ongoing training. Finally, there was no state mandated training for foster parents, either before placement or ongoing. The CFSR found that, as a result, there were some counties in which foster parents receive minimal training prior to having children placed in their homes.

2. In response to the CFSR findings, Wisconsin prepared a program enhancement plan (PEP) to address the deficiencies noted in the findings. The PEP was approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on October 31, 2004. Included in the PEP is an action to address the noncompliance of training for foster and adoptive parents. Under the approved PEP, the state is expected to implement a state-wide pre-service training and ongoing training program for foster and adoptive parents.

3. Five PEP committees were established to help shape policies, procedures, practices, and services to complete the goals of the PEP. One of these committees was the Foster Parent Training Committee. This Committee was established to coordinate the development and delivery of high-quality, competency-based pre-service and ongoing training for foster parents, treatment foster parents, and adoptive parents in order to strengthen the quality of care for children.

4. The Foster Parent Training Committee conducted surveys of county departments of human/social services, tribes, private child welfare licensing agencies, and foster parents to determine the current training requirements and to identify how a statewide curriculum could be constructed. The surveys found that 76% of the counties that responded (59 of 72 counties responded) mandated pre-service training, 9% offered pre-service training, and 15% provided no pre-service training. For ongoing training, 47% of counties mandated training. All eight private licensing agencies mandated both pre-service and ongoing training. The information gathered from tribes was inconclusive.

5. In a report dated March 23, 2006, the Training Committee made recommendations to implement mandatory pre-service foster parent training ranging from nine to 15 hours (to be completed prior to placement of a foster child), mandatory foundation foster parent training ranging from 18 to 24 hours (to be completed within 24 months of initial licensure), and mandatory ongoing training of 10 hours annually. The report also suggests specific content areas to be addressed in training. Materials and curricula for each phase of training (pre-service, foundation, and ongoing) are being developed and piloted.

6. DCF indicates that the current limited and inconsistent training provided to foster parents leads to recruitment and retention issues for the foster care program. In an April, 2002, National Conference of State Legislatures report, *Supporting and Retaining Foster Parents*, it is noted that child welfare experts agree that adequate training is critical to foster parent retention. With little training, children, birth families, foster families, and agencies do not have basic and fundamental knowledge about foster care. DCF also states that due to the caseload and lack of

funding, non-mandatory services and supports like foster parent training may be neglected.

7. According to the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning at the Hunter College School of Social Work, as of January, 2008, Wisconsin is one of only three states (Oregon, Virginia, and Wisconsin) that has no pre-service training requirement for foster parents. For the states that require foster parent pre-service training, New York requires certain content areas, but not the number of hours. For the remaining 46 states, required hours of pre-service training range from six hours in Minnesota and Pennsylvania to 45 hours in Connecticut.

8. DCF currently encourages counties to provide a standard 36-hour curriculum that addresses basic competencies for foster parents. The competencies are drawn from the partners in alternate care education (PACE) foster parent training program. The 36-hour training is designed as a pre-service curriculum, with foster parents encouraged to complete the training prior to receiving their first placement. There is no formal program for ongoing training of foster parents, with licensing agencies free to establish their own requirements for ongoing training.

9. The PACE training program covers content areas such as: (a) foster care overview; (b) working as part of the child welfare team; (c) sexual abuse; (d) the effects of abuse and neglect on child development; (e) the effects of care-giving on the family; (f) working with birth families; (g) cultural issues in placement; (h) attachment, separation, and placement; and (i) discipline and behavior management.

10. To encourage the use of the 36-hour PACE curriculum, or its equivalent, DCF passes through the federal funding reimbursed under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act for training activities to the counties that use this standardized training for foster parents. DCF indicates that the counties that have used PACE training or its equivalent noticed an improvement in the relationships between foster parents and birth families. As of January, 2008, at least 37 counties met the criteria to receive the Title IV-E pass-through for training. The Title IV-E pass-through was expanded in January, 2008, to allow for the pre-service training developed by the Foster Parent Training Committee.

11. AB 75 would provide \$402,500 (\$275,700 GPR and \$126,800 FED) in 2009-10 and \$705,000 (\$482,900 GPR and \$222,100 FED) in 2010-11 to require training for foster parents in the care and support needs of children who are placed in foster care. DCF would promulgate rules (and implement emergency rules before the permanent rules take effect) that prescribe the training required for foster parents and to monitor compliance with the rules.

12. Funding would support contracted staff through the training partnerships and training sessions for foster parents. Contracted services would include: (a) a caregiver training manager, beginning October 1, 2009 (\$75,000 in 2009-10 and \$100,000 in 2010-11); (b) three caregiver training specialists, beginning January 1, 2010 (\$135,000 in 2009-10 and \$270,000 in 2010-11); (c) three training support staff, beginning January 1, 2010 (\$105,000 in 2009-10 and \$210,000 in 2010-11); (d) foster parent training costs (\$37,500 in 2009-10 and \$75,000 in 2010-11); and (e) development of ongoing training (\$50,000 annually).

13. The Committee could eliminate the funding recommended by the Governor and direct DCF to extend the pass-through of Title IV-E funds for training under the pre-service training, foundation training, and ongoing training developed by the Foster Parent Training Committee in order to encourage more counties to use this training. Counties would receive additional federal funding if they used these training materials for all foster parents (Alternative 2).

14. However, DCF indicates that participation in the pass-through program did not significantly increase when the pass-through was expanded in January, 2008. In addition, as with deleting the Governor's proposal, there could be a risk of failing to be in substantial conformance with the next federal CFSR in 2010. If the state is found to be in nonconformance, the state could be subjected to financial penalties against funding it receives under Titles IV-B and IV-E and/or forced to implement a statewide foster training program to avoid further penalties.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$402,500 (\$275,700 GPR and \$126,800 FED) in 2009-10 and \$705,000 (\$482,900 GPR and \$222,100 FED) in 2010-11 to require training for foster parents in the care and support needs of children who are placed in foster care, beginning January 1, 2010.

2. Instead of requiring a mandatory foster parent training program, direct DCF to extend the pass-through of Title IV-E funds for training under the pre-service training, foundation training, and ongoing training developed by the Foster Parent Training Committee in order to encourage more counties to use this training. Eliminate the funding recommended by the Governor.

ALT 2	Change to Bill Funding
GPR	- \$758,600
FED	<u>- 348,900</u>
Total	- \$1,107,500

3. Delete provision.

ALT 3	Change to Bill Funding
GPR	- \$758,600
FED	<u>- 348,900</u>
Total	- \$1,107,500

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