
Fost-Adopt Parents Needs Assessment

Case Study: Family
Builders' parent
services evaluation

By Nadine Dixon for
Family Builders
Mills Public Policy Program
May 2, 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper looks at foster adopt parents and their interactions with Family Builders a non-profit licensed foster and adoption agency. The responses were collected by survey and through focus groups. There were 48 responses to the orientation survey, a sample of 24 for the PRIDE training survey, the post home study survey had 30 respondents and the finalization survey had 40 responses. Orientation and PRIDE training surveys were hard copy and the other two were online surveys.

Focus groups were held for ninety minutes with six preplanned questions. Focus groups were conducted to look at parents experience at four stages in the foster-adopt process. There was a group for parents with children in placement who had not yet adopted; a group waiting to be matched with a child. There were two groups for parents who had already completed the adoption process.

Findings at each stage of the process

Orientation survey- Parents were very please with services provided by Family Builders up to this point. The surveys showed that Family Builders is strong at this early stage of the process. Ninety-one percent of parents felt the inquiry process, first phone call, drew them in to continue the process. Parents felt Family Builders offered the customer service and respect needed in this process. Only forty percent of parents were looking forward to working with Family Builders at this point. This number could be improved upon through either the inquiry process or the orientation itself. A few parents responded that they felt Family Builders focused on LGBT issues too much for them.

PRIDE training – Parents felt they gained valuable knowledge from PRIDE training. One hundred percent of parents reported they had a better understanding of the process after training. Eighty-seven percent are satisfied with the support and assistance given them by Family Builders. Of the four training sessions, session one received the poorest rating. In Session I-topics covered are Connecting with PRIDE, Teamwork toward performance, Meeting development needs: attachment, Adolescent issues in adoption. Eighty-seven percent said they understood the topics, but a little more than half said there was enough time for discussion; videos, handouts etc were helpful; and the presentation was clear and well organized. It is important at this early stage in the process parents are treated well. This is an emotional time and expectations are high as they begin work with the agency. Orientation may be focused towards recruitment rather than just screening.

Post-home study- Three quarters of the parents at this stage in the process felt support and respect from Family Builders. Eighty percent gave high marks to the Family Developer, but roughly seventeen percent did not. The high marks continue with the home study social worker when asking about ease of relating. Although the results of the survey does show a desire for more information from the home study social worker and having the social worker addressing their concerns.

Finalization survey- a majority received the support and respect they wanted from Family Builders. In the survey a majority agreed that post placement services addressed the needs of their families.

Focus Groups – Fost-adopt parents are very willing and articulate when speaking on their experience with Family Builders. Parents felt Family Builders was doing a great job. The three areas where parents asked for change were in communication, community building and help with legal matters. It was expressed that parents were feeling isolated, overwhelmed with school needs for their children, and they were confused and frustrated with legal matters.

Most parents adopting through Family Builders are white non-Hispanic educated individuals. Individuals that would avail themselves of the services they need if given access. It would be good if Family Builders were to initiate some type of mentoring program. This study shows and it agrees with the literature that early-on and at the end stage of the process when parents are most emotional are times when individuals will drop out of the process. When looking at the orientation responses parent's engagement is not complete. By the time one has gotten to home study and matching they are committed and engaged. Once a child is placed and the legal issues are difficult, parents reported, is when one might again choose not to adopt from foster care. Family Builders lists a buddy system as part of its services, but it does not seem to be active .Based on the surveys, focus groups and literature the following recommendations are made:

- Create a check in system for parents at transition times
- Implement a mentorship program for parents
- Improve and promote support groups
- Inform parents of upcoming legal hearings
- Provide more information on the education system for families with younger children
- Expand recruitment focus beyond the LGBTQ community
- Hold workshops more frequently