



All levels of Foster Care from Intensive Treatment Foster Care to Foster to Adopt, are solely dependent on having families who are willing and able to provide services and homes for youth.

These youth may be a single individual to large sibling groups of varying ages and intensity of needs.

The struggles for agencies providing these services across the state include: no provider funding for recruitment of needed families, a lack of adequate funding for services and expertise, no funding for adoption services, and the growing need for middle of the night placements. Despite the increase in the cost of living each year, provider agencies have not received rate increases for services therefore forcing them to do even more with inadequate reimbursement.

SUPPORT FOSTER CARE

Strengthen support for West Virginia's treatment foster care and foster care providers by allocating adoption service reimbursement and recruitment funding, increasing the stipend provided for treatment foster care parents, and an additional service provision for providers and their families that place youth in foster homes after hours.

The West Virginia Child Care Association supports the following recommendations:

1. Establish Adoption Service Reimbursement

Reimburse agencies for costs associated with adoption case facilitation, which manages documentation throughout the entire court process and individual proceedings in addition to the required foster care case management and/or treatment services provided to the youth while in the foster to adopt home.

Currently: There is no reimbursement of costs to the provider agency for, or associated with, the complete adoption process and services they provide.

2. Provide Recruitment Funding to Providers

As families adopt, capacity has to be replenished. There is no funding allocated to child placing agencies responsible for replenishing as well as building additional foster home, foster to adopt home, Treatment Foster Care, and Intensive Treatment Foster Care home capacity. Explore any existing recruitment funding efforts being allocated by WVDHHR to non-child placing entities to determine the amount of funding being allocated and the productivity/results being provided. Determine if efforts are being duplicated by the non-child placing entities for the purposes of reallocating funds to replenish foster care homes.

3. Funding Treatment Foster Care Parents

Treatment and Intensive Treatment Foster Care requires Treatment Foster Care Training, targeted individualized training, smaller caseload sizes due to treatment needs, and additional services provided to families by child placing agencies through increased staff support, adaptive equipment and/or services, and staff expertise training. These are vital to providing treatment and follow National Best Practice standards to service youth in WV and in homes; unfortunately, this is simply underfunded.

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The West Virginia Child Care Association supports the following recommendations:



Impact of Inadequate Funding to the items above means Foster Care reimbursement rates do not cover providers' costs of doing business which is a vital and necessary services for the health and well-being of our youth. Therefore resulting directly in:

- Higher caseloads
- Less recruitment resources
- Less specialized trainings resulting in less expertise
- Foster parent reimbursement rates remain stagnate and inadequate as the cost of living rises
- Agency administrative and operational costs rise, salaries decrease or remain stagnant
- Workforce recruitment and retention for child placing agencies are in direct competition with private for-profit and other non-profit industries who have higher reimbursements and salary scales which results in an inability to acquire or retain staff
- Infrastructure costs are not met and continue to increase resulting in a lack of adequate resources to efficiently and effectively support service provision

4. Support 'After Hours Referral Funding'

Fund efforts to increase and support the well-being of youth, foster families and multiple child placing agencies' staff who are often awakened in the middle of the night to respond to the immediate needs of youth being removed from their homes.

Issue: Many agency staff and families are awakened in order to determine if the referred youth can be placed with them regardless if the placement will ultimately occur or not. This results in foster parents who are less willing to accept emergency late-night placements as they are consistently disrupted after hours and often late at night. This impacts the daily schedule and functioning of all staff and foster parents/families and is further taxing to all resources due to schedule adjustments of staff and families.

Recommendations include:

- Create a financial incentive for agencies that make placement for the night, after hours until 8am, to allow time for a home to be secured for placement. The provider will provide an incentive to the foster parents who accept after hours to 8am placements.
- Determine the number of needed placements which came to the WVDHHR's attention after hours.
- Exhaust and stop looking for kinship placement once the decision is made to contact the private providers for that night.
- Once a provider has successfully located a home for placement, establish a system to immediately notify other providers that a home has been secured to prevent further disruption for the family, especially during sleeping hours.