



Community Based Care: Hardee, Highlands & Polk Counties

# Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey Results

2017  
September 2017

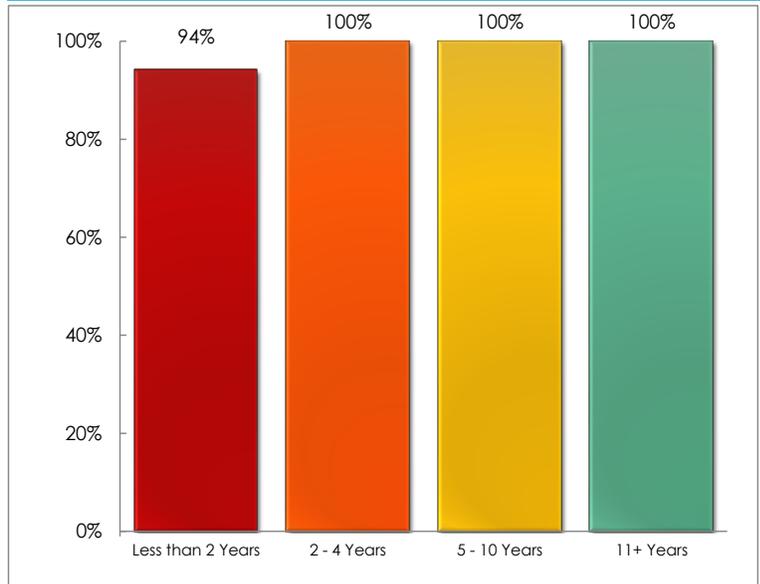
## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

LENGTH OF TIME LICENSED	PERCENTAGE
Less than 2 Years	32%
2 - 4 Years	41%
5 - 10 Years	18%
11+ Years	9%
TYPE OF FOSTER LICENSE	PERCENTAGE
Traditional	91%
Therapeutic - H.E.A.D.S.	0%
Medical	9%
COUNTY	PERCENTAGE
Polk	81%
Hardee	2%
Highlands	9%
Other/Unknown	8%
BY RE-LICENSING SPECIALIST	PERCENTAGE
Nicole Backherms	10%
Amanda Birge	27%
Brittany Jameson	15%
Cynthia Lanning	15%
Jonathan Martinez	13%
Elizabeth Petco	4%
Donna Segree-Lawson	16%

## SURVEY RESPONSE RATE



## SATISFACTION BY LENGTH OF TIME LICENSED



## RATING SCALE

A = Excellent

D = Poor

B = Good

F = Failing

C = Average

NA = Not Applicable

## SATISFACTION RESPONSES

SATISFACTION QUESTIONS	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
1. As a foster parent who completed the Passport to Parenting Preservice Training within the last year, how satisfied are you with preparation and training provided to you?	B	B	A	A	A	A	A
2a. How satisfied are you with the interactions you have had with Placements?	B	B	B	A	A	A	A
2b. With Case Managers?	B	C	B	A	B	A	A
2c. With Protective Investigators?	B	C	B	A	A	A	B
2d. Heartland for Children Staff?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	A	A
3. How satisfied are you with the follow-up/support calls that you receive after a child has been placed with you?	C	B	B	B	B	B	A

SATISFACTION QUESTIONS	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
4. How satisfied are you with the information received regarding the child(ren) placed in your home?	NA	NA	NA	NA	B	C	A
5. How satisfied are you with the training opportunities provided to you by HFC?	B	B	B	A	A	A	A
6. How satisfied are you with the information provided on how to properly escalate issues of concern if you encounter an obstacle you are unsure of how to handle directly?	NA	NA	NA	NA	B	B	A
7. How satisfied are you with the timeliness and accuracy of your foster care payments?	B	A	A	A	A	A	A
8. If the child needed health care, access to primary health care?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	A	A
9. If the child needed dental care, access to dental care?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	B	A
10. If the child needed mental health services, access to mental health services?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	B	C
11. If the child needed mental health services, effectiveness of the service?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	B	B
12. Overall, how satisfied are you as a foster parent with HFC?	B	B	B	A	A	A	A

SATISFACTION QUESTIONS	PERCENTAGE YES		
	2015	2016	2017
13. Have you been invited to provide feedback on a child in your home at school meetings, staffings, court proceedings, etc.?	86%	69%	76%
14. Do you feel that adequate support services are available to you and the child(ren) placed in your care?	79%	80%	85%
15. Do you feel that you are considered a valuable team member caring for children?	NA	86%	82%
16. Do you feel that you receive excellent customer service from the child welfare system as a whole?	NA	64%	69%
17. Now that you are a foster parent, do you feel that you receive the same level of service as when you were being recruited?	NA	77%	78%
18. Do you feel that your service to children is appreciated by the child welfare system staff?	NA	84%	87%
19a. Do you feel you are working in partnership with Case Managers?	64%	64%	70%
19b. With your Re-Licensing Specialist?	98%	99%	94%
19c. With GAL(s)?	79%	78%	83%
19d. With CLS?	56%	67%	70%
19e. With Independent Living Coach?	33%	89%	100%
19f. With Therapeutic Mental Health Provider?	89%	100%	67%
20. In the past year, have you tried to recruit other families to become foster parents with HFC?	69%	82%	83%
21. Have you worked with and supported the biological parents of the children placed with you to achieve reunification?	79%	81%	89%

## COMMENTS BY QUESTION

### Question 1: As a foster parent who completed the Passport to Parenting Preservice Training within the last year, how satisfied are you with the preparation and training provided to you?

Would have loved to get a class list or contact info to keep in touch.

4 wk cert program needed more info on procedure and court.

While I believe that the information provided is valuable, I often felt like the material was redundant and could have been consolidated into much less time which would allow more time for other topics...specifically, I would have liked some small group time interacting/interviewing several foster parents to gain "real life" perspective.

Better focus on the procedural aspects ex. Court, blue book paperwork etc...

### Question 2: How satisfied are you with the interactions with Placement/CM/PI/Heartland for Children Staff?

Case Manager: Voicemail full ☐ PI: Car smelling so much like smoke. Not very friendly.

Both case manager & the protective investigator that placed the children - often need to be asked & reminded several x.

CM often schedules things at last min or changes plans.

We need more communication.

Our relicensing counselor, Liz Petko, is absolutely phenomenal at her job. She follows up, is always timely, and I literally can not sing her praises enough. She gets an A+ in communication. The placement staff has also been very helpful in answering questions. ☐

I had issue with one case manager, hope I never get him again.

Some case managers are excellent however we have had a few that have been a nightmare.

Case Manager: Retention is a big problem.

HFC Staff: Everyone has been great, although I went thru a period wondering if y'all had my back.

I'm not sure what the heartland staff does...I've had multiple relicensing counselors.

My dealings with casemanager have been mostly with Eckard. I did have a courtesy worker from Polk who was excellent..J.C.

We have only had 2 good case managers out of the 8-10. Heartland as a whole is disappointing. But the foster parent side try their best to help.

Case managers are the worst to deal with. We don't get information timely, and often not at all. They fail to complete important tasks and follow through with important items to make progress in cases, often unnecessarily delaying the reunification process. Case manager turn over is extremely high and often causes more undue delay in progressing with cases.

### Question 3: How satisfied are you with the follow-up/support calls that you receive after a child has been placed with you?

I GET ALL THE SUPPORT THAT I ASK FOR AND IN A TIMELY MANOR.

Colleen from FBCH has been my main source of support. My foster child was in transition to a new case manager so that may be why we didn't have many calls or visits from them. Also Irma happened.

I love everyone in placements and love our relicensing specialist. Those seem to be the only people we can call upon to get things done or get things we need. Case management is rarely of any help, sadly.

With my first placement, I did not hear from relicensing for 2 weeks. Seems like that would be an important visit in a first placement situation. ☐

Our biggest communication issues have been in regards to when kids have left our house and it seems no one communicates this information. We received calls about our first foster child for another month after he left. This is true about the last little guy that left, I received a call from someone asking to come assess his development just yesterday and he has been gone almost a month. This has also affected our financial part of fostering which has been incorrect every time b/c their departure date is not noted properly.

### Question 4: How satisfied are you with the information received regarding the child(ren) placed in your home?

Was provided by Heartland worker after CM was asked several times. ☐

Blue binder missing things (case plan, CBHA, Medicaid card, etc.).

Most of the information provided when placements calls turns out to be wrong. Yellow jacket contents are a joke.

### Question 5: How satisfied are you with the training opportunities provided to you by HFC?

Training: Face to face classes would be nice.

Training: Feel like there's not enough training in dealing w/trauma behaviors.

Need more online training.

Trainings have not been geared for the ages in our home.

Training: Do training with TLC. Event Brite doesn't send credits. ☐

There is virtually no training available in Highlands county. ☐

### Question 6: How satisfied were you with the information provided on how to properly deescalate issues of concern if you encounter an obstacle you are unsure of how to handle directly?

Escalating issues: Haven't had to deal this past year with this issue.

Whenever an issue requires escalation, we have encountered case manager supervisors who were no more help, or kind, than the case manager with which we had issues.

**Question 7: How satisfied are you with timeliness and accuracy of your foster care payments?**

My only negative in regards to payment is I do not get reimbursed for doing respite care.

We have a few times been "nicked and dimed" over certain expenses or stipend funds a child should have been entitled to or that we should have been entitled to, such as annual clothing allowance. □

**Question 8: How satisfied are you with access to health care services?**

A child placed with us went to speech therapy and I didn't find it helpful, not because of the idea of therapy but I thought the therapist was not trained properly.

Primary health care: I would say that shelter physicals should be a little more thorough at Owl Now - looking for marks, etc.

**Question 9: How satisfied are you with access to dental services?**

No comments.

**Question 10: How satisfied are you with access to mental health services?**

Mental health care better than last year so far.

We had 2 children that did not receive mental health services in a timely manner, even with our constant request for those services. It took 6 months before anything took place. I hold the case worker responsible for the delay.

Mental Health services: My children went over 7 months w/o counseling although I requested many times. Since taken care of but it took way too long.

It would save a lot of waiting if foster parents could call in home therapy services versus having to wait for the cm's to do so.

I began requesting mental health services/play therapy for a placement in April 2016. They ran us up to Lakeland for preliminary appt, assuring me that future appts would be in-home, then said there were no services/providers available in our area. They knew where we lived from the start! By reunification in June, NO services had been provided.□

**Question 11: How satisfied are you with the effectiveness of mental health services?**

Mental health: Chrysalis? Briefly - discontinued services. Very dissatisfied with services, not effective. Was supposed to be set up with Big Bear, took months to set up & did not allow to start.

Seem to cause more emotional problems than they solve.

**Question 12: Overall, how satisfied are you as a foster parent with HFC?**

Need to be funded based on number of cases.

The kids that we have fostered are wonderful. We have not agreed with a few of the decisions made on behalf of our foster children and that is difficult/frustrating to understand but that is one of the many challenges of foster care.

GREAT PEOPLE TO WORK WITH.

Not real happy with some of the dcf workers and some of the case workers from other agencies.

HFC is a joke. The most ineffective, unprofessional organization I have ever worked with. And it's a shame, because this is really important stuff, especially for the kids. If there was another option, I would take it.

It took us a while to be licensed due to the disorganization of the licensing person, but we have LOVED our relicensing counselor who has been our best support of everyone we have worked with throughout our time as foster parents. Nicole has been the only person to get back to us in a timely manner, really listen to our concerns, and advocate for our foster children. She truly cares and does an amazing job.

Heartland for Children is the best agency we have had the pleasure of working with. CHS is horrible, and other agencies just don't seem to be as supportive as Heartland. We are so happy that we have the support of everyone at Heartland.

**Question 13: As a foster parent, have you been invited to provide feedback on a child in your home at school meetings, staffings, court proceedings?**

Only sometimes are we notified of staffings/court.

Sporadically.

N/A: too young.

I am still waiting on our case manager to notify me of upcoming court proceedings.

Invited no but I have attended.

Only sometimes.

Not until CHS called me into Heartland and now I hear nothing.

I used to not understand guardian ad litem's role but I believe now that they are concerned with us foster parent's opinions on what we think would be best for children in our care and might use our opinions in front of the judge....especially the young foster children that can't speak for themselves.

We were told about a staffing.

Sometimes.

Sometimes, not always informed.

Not even informed about court dates, staffings, etc., unless I insisted. They can't be bothered.

I marked yes only because I have been involved and invited by one CM that I have had this year so far. My other CM, I have to ask about upcoming court hearings and staffings. My last court date was over a week ago and I STILL haven't heard from the CM or GAL, but before a court hearing the GAL is calling and calling to find out what is going on with the child from my point of view and has only been to see my kid once. :(

Tho I feel our feedback meant nothing in staffings.

I feel that if I did not volunteer information, then what I have observed will not be considered. I frequently have to correct the case manager's information on the child.

We are welcomed to attend, but then case management does not keep us apprised of court dates and staffing meetings. We should not have to ask and hunt down this information. It should be automatic that every court date and staffing date should be provided to the foster family.

**Question 14: Do you feel that adequate support services are available to you and the child(ren) placed in your care?**

The online therapy should not be suggested for children under 10.

I do. But I also feel like I have to advocate a lot to make services happen in a timely fashion. That's not fair to the kids.

As adequate as the system allows.

I think most children should have behavioral evals each time they enter care as the last may no longer be relevant if done as an infant and child is now years older.

It would be nice to have a private FB group of foster parents in Polk, Highlands, Hardee.

Sometimes.

Financially speaking no....I believe we are supposed to receive a stipend for new placements. new placements have little clothes, diapers, socks, shoes, etc. Only once have I received a stipend of fifty dollars each for sisters, after having to ask for it, to kmart or marshalls two expensive stores and that was only enough to cover underwear, socks and shoes for each...no clothes, toiletries or other necessities...and if the children come with stipends they should be at least \$200 and given automatically not have to ask or hunt down it. I've had 21 children come through my home and only once, after asking, have received money for life items? on a whole, \$14 a day for 24 hour care, clothes, diapers, etc. seems unreasonable and taking advantage of us foster parents...believe it's time for us to be considered state employees with all the benefits that come with that as we are scrutinized way more than an average state employee and I believe do way more since we're on the clock 24-7.

Most of the time,

See above comments about training and mental health services.

I'm not sure what support services you are referring to, but it takes forever to hear about counseling. Some are better at communicating or helping than others. It's hard because we are on the front lines dealing with the emotional baggage of the children who have endured such trauma. The reality is that there isn't much support when things go wrong. When I encountered a situation earlier this year when my dog was tortured by a child and I asked for help, I was kind of left out there to find my own solution- in that moment I really needed help for the child and it really hurt that a comment was made "It was just a dog". When I needed the support it just wasn't there. When I was in a car accident recently, and I called the agency's on call, I never got a call back that night. Thankfully we were okay and I didn't need anything, and thankfully, HFC placement on call answered and knew the answers to my questions.

Currently, yes. With a previous child, no.

**Question 15: Do you feel that you are considered a valuable team member caring for children?**

We do so well the system feels comfortable leaving them in our care indefinitely.

Sometimes.

I am the team doing 95% of the work so yeah pretty valuable.

But there are times when we don't feel that way.

Absolutely not. This is one of the biggest failings, and I hear the same comment from other foster parents. They do not treat us with respect. We are always the last ones considered, if at all.

Yes and NO. Depends on the CM and GAL. When it is information that they need, I hear from them, but when I ask for an update sometimes it sits on the back burner. I have felt validated in court hearings even though I still feel less than when I sit in the back of the room.

I don't think foster parents are considered anything. I feel like we are look at as babysitters long term.

**Question 16: Do you feel that you receive excellent customer service from the child welfare system as a whole?**

I feel like things would not go smoothly if I had less time to be involved, make phone calls, etc. I've had to be very persistent. The turnover rate also causes set backs.

Underfunded, understaffed, and view the children's right to permanency as irrelevant.

I feel like this is a difficult question because there are many individuals involved. I feel like there are individual that DO provide excellent customer service (Liz Petko being one) but not as a whole.

When a child is placed I feel very much in a sink or swim situation. The time between placement and follow up regarding visits, school, case plan, medical and basically any info is far too long. Communication is non existent in the first few weeks when u feel the most in need of help.

Some of the people have been excellent and others very unsatisfactory.

Sometimes.

I feel like I can get ahold of someone if necessary.

Yes sometimes , but more no when they say they are going to do things and then they don't and that's not fair to the children or anyone else.

Ha ha - that's funny! There were a few bright spots, such as the person who came to do the CBHAs on my first placement. And the person who used to facilitate the support group meetings, until they were cancelled by HFC. Those 2 people went above and beyond, but everyone else? Ha!

I don't know that I would rate it excellent but by far it's not failing. Some are better at communicating or helping than others.

I feel like the child welfare system is letting children down and not doing what is best for them.

For the most part. As stated, case management is almost unbearable at times. And when you finally get a great case manager, they leave. :(

This depends on who answers the phone first at some places.

**Question 17: Now that you are a foster parent, do you feel that you receive the same level of service as when you were being recruited?**

It took me several attempts to get information about becoming a foster parent at all. Information flow is much better now.

Not sure.

Service yes, made to feel less important each year that past's , but understand that every one is busy and as long as children get what they need that's all that matters.

Nope. They get you in, then do NOTHING to keep you. Why do you think they're losing homes left and right? They treat people like crap, to put it bluntly.

No, but I feel like the services are different. It's nice the appreciation times throughout the year.

We knew it would be tough but seeing how broken the system is is disheartening.

I did not have a lot of interactions when I was being recruited.

I sometimes feel that the low risk foster parents get put on the back burner of things. Although my re-licensing specialist is great at always being just a phone call away and always helping with anything.

#### Question 18: Do you feel that your service to children is appreciated by the child welfare system staff?

Sometimes.

Not at all by CHS, others yes.

Yes and no...when people learn what we get paid they then appreciate the sacrifice of this full time, 24 hour job.

Sometimes.

Another humorous question. They act like we are 'a dime a dozen'. I've received more words/comments of appreciation from the general public, family and friends than from anyone in the system.

Some are a definite yes and others say it but don't seem genuine. My new caseworker upon telling her, you will hear a lot from me... I'm big on communicating and I gave her examples. She said, Oh good. Some foster parents will only tell me when I ask how a visit went "good" I like that you will give me details. It felt good to hear that.

To some yes, but not to all.

This again depends on day and person.

#### Question 19: Do you feel you have been treated as a full partner with Case Manager, Re-Licensing Specialist, GAL, CLS, Independent Living, and Therapeutic Mental Health Provider?

Not the courts however. When attending hearings we are relegated to the background and only participate when we insist, not by invitation.

We are still new to our current case manager, but I will say that I wish there was more communication about the case/case plan/ upcoming court dates

I wish there was a sometimes category or even usually. Some GALs and CMs are fantastic and this makes one pull the whole survey question down.

Donna has given fantastic advice and is always willing to assist! We are not regularly informed of court hearings, staffings or other important appointments regarding our foster child. The child's Case Manager placed the child in therapy, which she attends after visitation with her parents in the CHS office. I am not provided reports regarding the sessions or contacted about ways to handle the child's very difficult behavioral problems though I have reached out several times.

Therapeutic: Somewhat.

GAL: When in place.

Yes and no with relicensing so hard to answer...I don't bug them and they keep changing so not sure who is on my side.

Case managers we have now are great. guardians have been ok when they show up.

Couple of Guardian ad Litem, have been great, some don't show up.

It's hard to rate this generally speaking. For me, my CM have been night and day.

Volunteer guardians are amazing! The actual guardians I feel act like they know everything about the child and the family but aren't the ones doing the actual visits.

#### Question 20: This past year have you tried to recruit other families to become foster parents?

I always share with our friends our experience and the pros/cons that we have lived through fostering.

Have suggested to certain people but have not pushed it.

4 or 5 families.

And I wouldn't until some things change. It's my name and reputation on the line, and I'm not going to recommend that people get involved with this organization so they can be treated poorly, and experience major frustration and stress. It's unfortunate, for the sake of the kids, but things need to change. I hear the same from most of the other foster parents. Why would I recruit?

When others ask me about how or why I became a foster parent, I do share. I do share Heartland's posts on social media, but I don't do more than that.

We have talked to others to try it but now I feel as though it wouldn't be fair to put them thru it.

#### Question 21: Have you worked with and supported the biological parents of the children placed with you to achieve reunification?

It is easier if the foster caregivers do not allow the children to refer to them as Mom and Dad. Foster caregivers need to realize that they are there to replace relative caregivers, that are not available, not the parents! It should be referred to as, family supporting, not "co-parenting". Unless TPR occurs children in foster care have Moms and Dads. I also think foster caregivers should be encouraged to use of pay-as-you-go cell phone for parents to communicate with their children and the caregivers. This helps ease the possibilities of negative experiences and apprehensions of giving out personal cell phone numbers.

I send pictures regularly and text with our child's birth mom to encourage her to follow through with her case plan.

Yes, but now don't. Uncomfortable due to their drug addiction & stealing.

The children are not being reunified.

We haven't had the opportunity with this case because we didn't meet any relatives in the short time we've had him. But we have in the past.

Have tried to co-parent before but the cases we have had lately it has not been that positive.

We try hard but they don't always cooperate.

Yes and no.

I have tried. I have closed communication with one parent because she has been hostile with me. My new one, I have been advised not to disclose my location or phone number.

With one parent on a case. My other two cases no.

At this time, it is not recommended by caseworker.

I tried and had to stop in person contact due to threats to my safety. Texts seem to be working ok.

We co-parent with ALL of our children's biological parents and have, thus far, always had a good relationship and rapport with the children's parents and families. We remain close with the families of all of our reunified children even after reunification.

## Question 22: What aspects of the experience make it easy or difficult for you to actively encourage others to volunteer to become foster parents?

Misconceptions about foster care make it difficult. Fear makes it difficult.

I think people that we know seeing us foster is busting down the myths or assumptions about foster care. The only thing that is hard is seeing how broken the system can be.

The rewards that come with the job.

I have experience in social work & the foster care field. Without that experience, I think its difficult for people to understand the system, the lack of funding & the effects of over worked & over loaded CMs.

It is rewarding & I enjoy the children in my home. Sometimes it feels like too many people coming to the house - I don't like having to rearrange my schedule so often.

The longer children are in foster care the harder it is to separate at the conclusion of the case. Most cases last longer than 12 months. This especially problematic when re-licensing specialists allow foster caregivers to anticipate adoption.

Helping the children and parents children go through the process.

The satisfaction of keeping boys that appreciate most of what you do for them. When they look you in the face and tell you they love you.□

Saying goodbye to kids you've bonded with makes it hard.

The seeming lack of organization and structure to the whole system. As someone who likes to plan and see consistency and purpose behind decisions, foster care is a challenge. There is also a lot that must be done with each new placement and very little support in doing so. As a working mom, it is a challenge to find time to sit at WIC and ELC for food/childcare vouchers, and then to get a child into a doctor that takes medicaid so that immunizations can be up-to-date and said child can attend daycare, then find a daycare for them to attend without a waiting list...the initial checklist is extensive. I have found that life pretty much must be put on hold for 72 hours in order to accomplish the tasks needed to merge a child into our regular routine. This is not always possible or practical to most families with 2 working parents, which is the majority of our friends. The part that makes it easy to recruit our friends is the kids. Once these children have a face and a name, they are no longer a staggering statistic, and saying "yes" to that placements call is easy.

The invasive aspects of visits.

Support from case manager, re licensing, feeling like u are constantly under a microscope, feeling the need to be home at a moments notice for visits etc make it difficult..The reward of the children growing, loving, learning is the best reward and make it more than worth all the frustrations.

Helping the children is rewarding and some of the personnel are very helpful, however you will run into the personnel that are terrible at communication and have zero customer service skills.

Many people are worried about the emotional strain fostering has on themselves and their families. It just takes time and hearing many people's stories of success to be able to change their hearts and minds.

There is a severe lack of services available to assist both children and foster parents in Highlands County.

I talk to people in a positive way for encourage them to be a foster parent.

The people at Heartland for Children really care.

I tell them its very rewarding for what you can do for a child.

The joy of seeing children happy & healthy, having fun & laughing.

The children are in need of quality care, makes it easy. Having the proverbial knife in my back by CHS makes it difficult.

People are afraid to get bad kids.

We have not had an opportunity to encourage or discourage.

THE SATISFACTION OF THE JOY OF TAKING CARE OF CHILDREN YOU LEARN TO LOVE VERY QUICKLY.

A TON of responsibility with little pay, actually no pay as the small stipend barely covers cost of living for the child....diapers, clothes, wipes, toiletries, food, etc. so talking someone into 24 hour babysitting with no pay is almost impossible...making sure someone is defending and supporting us foster parents in the system would be comforting too...doing it for the kids is all I can say that's positive...that covers all the negatives for me.

The positives that come from foster care far out weigh the negatives. It's easy to care for and love the children who come into our care. It is difficult if we see them going back to a home or relative that is not suited to care for them. It's also hard to say goodbye. But the time we get with them is worth it. We encourage anyone who feels called to care for children in need but we make sure to tell them that it is not easy.

Friends, family, neighbors have seen what is involved and alot feel there is a high demand on foster parents. They have witnessed my home being investigated and the stress it can cause..Two of my friends did become foster parents; one a traditional and the other medical.

The reward of seeing children being happy and healthy and giving them a good start.

Sometimes it seems that the parent rights are more important than the children, That's difficult at times. Remove a child or baby with out know the people they are going with when they spent most of there life or long time with one set of foster parents. That is just devastating & wrong and our system needs to better when it comes to these situations. See the children happy & loving makes it easy.

The way we are treated makes it very difficult.

The case managers! A lot are rude because they are overworked and take it out on the foster parent or quick to blame the foster parent for something.

Lack of support, the feeling of being used by the child welfare system, abuse allegations against me.

Easy- expressing how enriched our lives have been by making a difference in the lives of the children and families we have come to know and love.□  
Hard- #1- Getting over the stigma of the children being "bad" and having issues that most parents couldn't deal with. The public needs to watch the Paper Tigers documentary. A screening of this movie should be offered more frequently and used in conjunction with all foster parent info nights and training classes. #2- The fear of getting attached and then the children going back home. More emphasis should be placed on how co-parenting garners respect from the families of the children and allows for continued contact even after reunification. This avoids the feeling of "loss," at least for us. We still talk to all our babies and spend time with them and their families.

The true need for children to live in safe, loving homes and God's mandate to take care of orphans.

### Question 23: Positive Experiences with Services

My relicensing counselor is AMAZING!

Therapy: Dr. Thomas with Trinity was awesome, but she quit and seemed very busy/overwhelmed. Donna Vanshy (Guardian ad Litem) was amazing. LRC - tutoring has been good, just took a while to start. Heartland has been absolutely wonderful as well.

Big Bear Mental Health - Once services began, they have been helpful & consistent but (see "improvement needed") . . .

Pat & Vicki - GALs - overall very positive experiences, get more info about court/staffing from them than case managers.

We had a positive experience with a caseworker of former children Chris Parke. We are also doing OK with our present caseworker Skye Dodd.□  
The administrative staff of Heartland has also been very helpful.

Nurse care (Teresa) is the best. She has helped with insurance needs as well as finding out child's PCP and guidance on getting a needed medical device.

Even if you feel like you cannot handle a child take a little longer and most of the time they will come around just have patients some take longer than others.

The training from my relicensing lady in case worker to make with go through hurricane.

Liz Petko has been the most helpful person that we have encountered in this journey. If she doesn't know an answer, she finds it. She is always timely and we can count on her. Shane (not sure last name) transported our current foster child to us late one night and he was very friendly and helpful. Our interaction was short but he made a positive impression. Mary Butler (CPI), I appreciated her communication with us. While this case did not go as expected and I adamantly disagree with the decision to return our foster child to relative placement, I do think she kept us in the loop.

Billie Bradley is very helpful for being so busy.

When case managers go above and beyond to make sure u are informed. Very grateful for the ones who are willing to help whenever/however.

Liz Petko is always willing to work with our schedule even doing evening or weekend home visits if necessary.

Gardner and Audrey and Lyz and April have been very helpful and pleasant to work with. They communicate well and have always answered our questions or gotten us what we needed quickly. We have worked with 2 guardian ad litem's whose names I cannot recall that were very prompt with scheduling and timing their visits.

I have had little interaction with the child's counseling provider.

When I see the reunification with the biological parents. I am enjoy the kids happiness. When that happen I see the goal was made.

Counseling through HEADS. Early Steps.

Activities for children, after school programs, in-home counseling.

N/A for the children I have now and for 2016/2017.

All experiences have been good.

We have only been licensed for 5 months so our experiences with service providers is limited. So far we have not had any problems and all interactions have been positive.

ALL THE CASE WORKERS CHECK ON AND VISIT OFTEN THE KEEP ME INFORMED ABOUT THEIR CASE.

Coral Benka has been a wonderful guardian ad litem...considers my feelings and hopes for the children placed with us. Amanda land has been a good case worker doing what she says and on time appreciating what I do.

Case Manager Florian Kollment, is supportive and professional. He pays attention to detail and makes sure the children have what is required to make the foster parents job easier.

Amanda Birge, my relicensing counselor is very proactive and readily available when I have question and concerns. She is very professional and very nice to work with. J.C.Gonzales was a courtesy worker for my child for about 2 years. He was timely, cosine rate of my time and professional.

Case managers that help with visits, doctor appointments, etc..... its great when supplies that are needed are brought to us.

When show that they care and take time help by taken the kids to appointments & visit's. The 2 case we have now are good and do these things . Chuana Ervin & Sarah Moffitt , I know it's not easy when they have heavy case load.

I mentioned them earlier. The woman who came to do the CBHAs on my first placement - do not remember her name, long time ago. And Juanna Moultrie, who facilitated the support group. Also felt positively about 2 of the daycares - Noah's Ark and Babbling Babies.□

Heartland for Children are the people that work the hardest.

I'm not sure what you mean by "service providers" but this is what I feel you are looking for: From Gulf Coast: Lakezia Perry. She was really on top of things and always responded back. She made sure I had everything I needed for the resource book. She allowed me to vent things to her when I was frustrated. She accommodated my schedule without hesitation. She shared stuff with me concerning the case. She truly made me feel like an equal. I really miss her level of professionalism. HEADS: Robert He was excellent at communicating and had genuine sense of concern for the boys he was servicing. HFC: April Haught- I have had such great correspondence with her about training hours or the times that my placement specialist had been out of office. Wendy Cheny- When I felt uncomfortable in a situation regarding "shadowing" I felt validated and the matter was taken care of. Placements- Eleana and Todd- and probably others but they address all of my questions and the ones they don't know the answers to, and I say find out, they do. After asking 50 questions and I decide to say no to a placement they don't ever seem mad that I took up their time. I feel bad sometimes but as soon as I know it's a no I tell them. Lynette- I appreciate all the educational help, especially recently trying to find the best placement school wise for my new kid. After feeling frustration with a CM response she truly reduced my stress load and seemed happy to take the challenge on.

We loved the volunteer guardians for our children. Can't remember spellings of names. We also love our relicensing counselor. They have tried their best to support us.

Suncoast Dental in Tampa/Brandon has been great with routine and emergency dental care, though it's a significant drive.

The guardians have all been great to work with. The counselors have all been great to work with. Too many to name, but I don't think we've ever had a bad experience with any GAL or counselor.

See what I wrote previously about Nicole.

#### Question 24: Opportunities for Improvement with Service Providers

It was suggested that a 7 year old who acts like a 4-5 year old do online therapy. CHS office is very run down and scary looking. Very dark inside also. Case manager had voicemail full all the time and did not give a heads up most times if she was going to be off work for vacation, etc. Sibling was placed at Hibiscus House in Jensen and brothers saw each other very rarely in a 9 month span. 4 year old at group home was in daycare instead of getting school readiness at VPK last year. Now he is having A LOT of trouble in kinder because it's his first time in school and because an IEP could have been started for ESE preschool if he would have gone to VPK. Seems like a lack of forethought or dedication to child's best interest.

It took 7+ months to get our CM to complete a referral (and follow up on it) for counseling services for our kids. I believe this is b/c they do not have serious MH issues or behaviors & therefore was not treated as a priority. I believe every child in foster care should have a counselor to talk to regardless of behaviors and MH diagnosis!

Communication from case managers.

You really need to have top to bottom improvement at Devereux. They are very non-communicative, they have made troubling mistakes in processing cases we have experienced with them to the point of lengthening the time to permanency because of unprofessional mistakes.

Survive I need has been great.

Had a rude & racist sounding woman do an eval on a foster child - she was very unprofessional w/her opinions.

XXX-The licensing process took a very long time, in some part due to having to re-do parts of our paperwork that was "lost." In addition, she was not very responsive in scheduling and following up so that we could progress in our home study/interview/etc. She seemed very disorganized and scattered.

A little quicker response from caseworkers would be nice.

Case managers who treat u as a thorn in their side. Slow to respond and not forthcoming with info.

There have been calls from placements and post placements where I did not feel like my concerns were heard or that I was inconveniencing someone with a question. xxx has been unpleasant to work with. We receive little communication and there have been some instances where he has had to schedule something last minute that was very inconvenient for us and I do not feel that we are respected or listened to.

Better communication!

I don't have negative experience yet.

Dx from psychiatrist @ HEADS.

Sitter program or swap or share w/others. Not enough time for foster parents to get out once or twice a month without children. Dealing with children behavior after visit. Worker that don't share info with us.

DOING A GREAT JOB.

I worry a little about the relicensing counselor aspect...the other foster parent in my area had a complaint brought against her that seemed simple and in no way her fault and she felt that relicensing was not supporting her and that concerns me because they are the ones who are supposed to support and defend us...we foster parents worry about allegations and want to be very reassured that we have support if an allegation is brought against us.

Reduce case loads to allow more time with children and allow quality of service.

Some of the casemanagers leave me with bad impressions. Sometimes they can be condescending and not upfront.

Case managers do what they say they are going to do. Guardians need to be more present in the childrens lives.

Some of their supervisor should step when case loads are heavy, they shouldn't take vacations @ the same time, (work & supervisor) this happed a couple of times. In past had couple of workers that we felt like it's all about parents before children. This is all I can think of @ this time.

I have previously provided extensive information and details on improvement opportunities to xxx and xxx, at their request. To my knowledge, none of it was ever followed up on.

The case managers have been horrible in the past for many agencies.

I can't call out names but the grows I have for improving are this: When a foster parent is frustrated be genuine and listen. Sometimes we just need to be heard. Validate the concerns. Choose words, body language, and tone that says I am here to help rather than giving the impression that it's my fault that x, y, or z happened. Communicate. When a question is asked, respond back. Even if it's a "I don't know.. let me get back to you on that" works- but remember to then follow up. Don't just read a text message and then not respond. I see the read receipt. I get it, not all texts need a reply, but some do. When most are read and not responded to, it sends a message- why should I even bother? And truthfully, sometimes I don't.

Making foster parents apart of the case instead of bystanders. That way their voice is really heard and not over looked. Maybe not over work case managers so they don't see the child as a number, and actually care about the case.

Children's Home Society has had a lot of turnover in case managers, adding to how long the child is in care.

I am glad that K-Mart's going out of business will eliminate them on the clothing voucher options. They were nearly unbearable to work with and refused returns. (a belt buckle broke after wearing it once and they refused to replace it).

CHS is now placing us with a FIFTH caseworker. I think that is a ridiculous turnover rate in 16 months.□  
Mr. Bill is really good at being a GAL. -xxx

### Question 25: Suggestions for increasing the number of quality foster homes in Polk, Hardee, and Highlands Counties?

I love the FB videos. I think showing people that it really is not as scary as they think.

I think it makes a huge difference for people to see others doing this. So, possibly helping current homes recruit or having current homes/families meet interested people? Getting groups together locally by area? Keep hounding the churches : ). Dustin Prickett is willing to present : ).

Continue to advertise the way its doing now. That's how you get people's attention.

Keep advertising. Keep up social media attempts. I see HFC ads a lot around town : ).

Not really sure. I know you guys work hard and I'm not really even sure what all you have to do now. I do wish there were more support groups out there - or maybe there are and we just aren't being informed of. (TLC is only one I'm aware of now since Devereux no longer provides support group). I think more staff would make it better for the families. Seems everyone has high case load and not enough time. More homes = more of a case load??

You need to find a way to have one caseworker visit foster homes once a month. Having multiple caseworker organizations needing separate visits monthly can become a burden on working foster caregivers. Solving this would also solve problems of hourly wage caseworkers having to drive between counties, wasting valuable time, especially as caseload numbers have multiplied exponentially with a lack proper funding from the state.

Parenting a child that has not always had consistent parenting is hard and often biological parenting skills (meaning "what I did w/my kid") are inadequate and "trauma" based training falls flat as child's behavior is not caused by trauma but by lack of parenting. I think foster parents should have better access to behavioral experts for advice on how to deal with behaviors which are outside the scope of "normal" but do not rise to a "diagnosable" level. I know ABA Behaviorists are available for some extreme cases but a lack of behavior support has been the biggest blocks in us wanting to continue and recommending that others become foster parents. I wish Heartland had an on call "behavioral expert" that could be reached with questions or to set up behavioral plans.

Advertise, Tee shirts of a foster parents: I Foster (ask me how). Bumper stickers. "Share the Love"

None - you guys doing a great job.

More resources near Davenport area. Children and foster parents.

Emphasize the good foster parents publicly & celebrate them.

More church outreach/informational sessions. Hire more case workers/support staff so that they can be very attentive to their lesser caseload and make the foster parents feel like they are in partnership and not over-worked. Offer "foster parent nights out" where there is babysitting provided and moms/dads can go out to eat. Make the licensing process more streamline and organized, possibly move some of the training to online modules which will pull parents less away from home for training....8 weeks of hiring a babysitter and modifying work schedule to attend licensing was both costly and difficult.

I've been a foster parent a long time and for me you want a parent that has a heart to do this. You can recruit all kinds of people but if their heart is not in it, they wont stay in it. I'm not sure but I know this has been the most rewarding thing that I have ever done. I'm still in touch with families that I worked with years ago. Watching them grow up... what a BLESSING!!

Hire specialist who are impartial, transparent, unbiased, encouraging and fair to all regardless of their marital status, age and or ethnicity.

Not sure.

Getting pastors to preach on this subject, that was what got us involved.

More communication and customer service skills. We completely understand that you guys are over worked and under staffed! We feel the same way sometimes so we should really try to find a mutual appreciation for each other by building stronger relationships through kindness. □

Training sessions should be more frequent. Some people want to start training but are unavailable 6 months out.□

Training should be offered in more areas. Some people are unable to drive out of town once a week for several weeks to complete the training.□

Training sessions could be more compacted. Without skimping on the information, training sessions could be 4, 6 hour sessions or something of the like instead of 9, 3 hour sessions.□

Make more trainings available in Highlands and Hardee county.

More community events and increase support for the foster homes. Maybe more success stories being relayed to the community.

Keep going and present what important they are to a child. Explain to them, a kid waiting for they outside. Explain how many things we can do together for save a kid.

None.

Unsure, but know that most people our age range don't want to give up their freedom. We can't and don't do all things we were before becoming foster parents. They do kids night once in a while but only about 2 hrs in Lakeland by the time drop off & pick up, not much time left / 40 mins.

Talk with them explain to the foster family that you need to know everything about yourself.

Let people interested in being foster parents meet current foster parents with the children so they can see that the children are just like other children.

IT IS HARD BEING A FOSTER PARENT BUT THE SATISFACTION OF SEEING THE RESULTS IS GREAT.

Make fostering a career opportunity and pay as you would an employee of the state...we basically are full time, 24 hour babysitters for the state without pay.

Don't really know. It's just something in your heart that you want to do.

? The rewarding feelings knowing your helping better there life's.

The Golden Rule: Treat people as you would like to be treated.

When quality isn't cared about, quality goes away.

Nothing.

Any opportunity to raise awareness and educate the community. The initiative to work with local churches was a great idea, but not sure if that is still a strong and active partnership. Working closely with the schools and recruiting the teachers may be another good resource since they clearly already have the love for children. And if there is any way to tap into resources for parents struggling to have children naturally???

By visiting churches and schools.

#### Question 26: What do you feel are some strengths that you have experienced within the local child welfare system?

Awesome staff!

Heartland does a wonderful job! The staff is friendly and helpful. I've realized in this last year that you all really do "have my back"/support us with difficult placements or even with difficulties dealing with the service providers. Love Amanda! And Nicole was great during maternity, too!

The way everyone comes together to support each other.

I love HFC and think they do good work.

Many support groups at our fingertips to utilize.

Quality foster care homes. Caring people trying to care for these children with ridiculous funding constraints.

Staff is responsive to questions and issues, usually within mins to few hours. Staff seems invested in care and well being of children.

Having people that care for the children's problems and understanding that it is not the child's fault that they are in foster care.

Everyone we have had contact with is very helpful & positive, good attitude people.

Yes the case workers and Heartland for Children they doing a great job and my case worker going through the hurricane Irma my relicensing lady Donna help me a lot. They were checking on me and my kids even in the office it was close and was on the weekend for my relicensing in Case Workers. A+ Excellent.

Getting the children in care in a timely manner.

Concerned CMs - involved relicensing people.

I have met some great foster families in our community.

When you get to someone they are helpful.

I have received a lot of support from our relicensing specialist and foster mentor.

Heartland workers have always been great to work with.

Feel okay.

Actively caring.

Communication w/HFC has improved greatly!

I think they do care about the children.

Everyone makes sure I have all the info I need.

BEING ON TOP OF ALL THINGS THAT ARRIVE.

Mostly everyone involved is respectful of our time...we're left alone to be a family as much as possible, only being bugged when necessary.

Training programs on line user friendly.

Medical, counslers, and reponses from heartland about any issues.

Educating, ongoing training and keep support.

Foster parents are supportive of each other.

Support is very good from the system in general, but case managers really hurt that success when foster families and children in care can't get what they need and cases drag out unnecessarily.

xxx said she would like the placement staff to make sure the children are fed when they get picked up to move to a foater home. She wants children to be able to bring their belongings. (She didn't get to bring her bike. The staff should demand the guardians allow the children to take their stuff. Her family pawned her toys and electronics.)

#### Question 27: Opportunities for Improvement within the System of Care

Frustrating how judges occasionally ignore the recommendations from HFC, GAL, or foster parents & rather just do their own thing.

Less turnover, less need for group homes (in a perfect world), more "on the same page" with case manager, guardian, therapist, etc. Easier cases moving through court in a more timely manner. Less attitude of "that's just how it is - the system is slow/broken" and more motivation/striving for excellence.

None now.

Our CMs and the system are overloaded. We've been through numerous CMs and relicensing workers. This is hard on foster families & kids. I understand the lack of funding and CM overturn. It's just hard to deal with. With each new worker, we have to relearn, tell our story again or our kids have to regain trust. I know this isn't HFC problem but it's a barrier to foster parent.

Would like to see all departments have better communication amongst each other.

I think there are many opportunities for classes for relicensing but not many fall during convenient times. Maybe just more options (that include child care!).

Depending on working foster caregivers to take the place of caseworkers in terms of supervising visits or meeting the needs of parents. It's one thing to be a support network for parents who are diligently completing case plans and fast approaching reunification. It's another thing asking us to be any kind of support to parents who show no intention of improving their lives for the sake of their children.□

Paperwork seems to be hard to get/low priority and blue books are not complete. Summary of court/JRs.

Training for relicense a full day with care. We have a hard time getting our work schedules off for 1-2 hour training - very hard to get off same time - if notified in advance we could schedule off for the day of training.

Better daycares and activities in the Davenport area.

Less time in care for all children involved. More online support. More training on co-parenting & trauma care.

Communication.□Consistent organization structure across all entities.□More face-to-face interaction/assessment with children on the part of the case manager. How can they advocate for the child's best interest in court if they never spend time with them?

I'd like to more Fosterparent gathering & support. I'd also like to see babysitting facilitated at the trainings for OUR KIDS, since we all have children and can't attend without a sitter. Although we'd like to go.

More help for caseworkers.

Communication in the first few weeks after placement. Especially for new foster families. I was totally caught off guard by lack of info in the first few weeks after very first placement. I had no idea how to deal with medical/daycare/school etc. I've realized that's just how it goes, but is still a very big frustration for me.

We would like to see Heartland hold the agencies more accountable for actually helping the kids. The legal services have been terrible in certain cases.

Suggestion: Let case worker supervise visitation to the biological parents. Be sure that the biological parents have everything in order before they move the kids to their home again.

Retention of case managers.

Faster response to child's needs like counseling. Or what ever the need for new child coming in to home. Make transitioning for babies and toddlers better and not so disruptive, smooth make household better for everyone. Get to know people as not to cause detachment disorder.

I feel that FPs should be tuned in to what's going on with bio parents. I feel this helps us (FPs) when having to deal with our kiddos when they return from visits. CHS never reveals. Can't tell you when I last had a home visit.

Not having a child in care for such a long amount of time.

Specifically babies born with drugs in the system mother should only get 6 months to straighten up. I know it's a year but as a count of child abuse they should get less. This way the baby is still adoptable and can bond and adoptive parents can experience baby's firsts. And of course pay needs to improve.

Case load reduction and less staff turnover.

More casemanagers in the know. Respite reimbursement.□

More guardians to interact with the children. making sure that the case managers are all about the children. that they treat their position more than just a job. some of these case managers should be more concerned about the children than the parents.

Way too extensive to list here. The problems are systemic, and they come from the top. (See my previous comment on improvement opportunities previously provided.)

Actually listening to the foster parents.

Better case managers. Not sure how to do this as it is admittedly a tough job and takes a special kind of person to do it well and to manage the massive case loads, but this is a must. Case managers appear to be the leading cause for most people who decide to stop fostering, according to those we've spoken with.

Following the law in regards to permanency for children so a child does not grow up in foster care.

Care for quicker permanency. We shouldn't have to wait 6 months to have a TPR signed. Our children wish to be adopted and are not given any answers.

## Question 28: Comments or Suggestions

Just as a side note - not as a foster parent but as a previous relative caregiver (which is how we came to be foster parents). Very disappointed in the way subsequent placement was handled and I called every person I knew and never did get help or answers. Ultimately was not able to provide care for a full blooded sibling of my adopted daughter whom I just found out was adopted and we were never notified (and I was told we would be).

The legislature has got to fund foster care CBC's based on number of children the state brings into the system not some weird gerrymandered, politically based, formula.

We are enjoying our role as foster parents and have had a positive and enjoyable experience!

There are a lot of resources and things for children in Lakeland but Davenport is expanding and we need more here in this area.

I think a round table discussion with several foster parents would be helpful and would identify mutual concerns/praise/suggestions to improving our local system.

We have been very displeased with Gulf Coast Jewish Society.

Suggestions: When kids placement in our home they don't have clothes. 1. Please send a voucher for buying clothes because that is emergency placement. Most of the time they come without clothes. 2. Check kid for lice please bring us a lice treatment for help kids and treat them at home.

Amanda Birge and Berlendah Gadson (Devereux) are great workers. They do everything in their power to be there for us as foster parents and the children in our home.

My relicensing specialist, Donna Segree-Lawson is the best!!!!!! She is what keeps me going when I begin to get frustrated and want to quit. She always supports us and we love her very much. When no one else can get information or get things done, Donna has always stepped in on our behalf and made progress for us to resolve issues.

xxx would be happy to share more to advocate for future kids in the system.