

## APPENDIX C

### UPDATE ON OHIO'S FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION RECRUITMENT PLAN

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) has made significant progress in implementing the state's 2015-2019 Foster and Adoptive Parent Recruitment Plan. The recruitment plan consists of five core goals. The accomplishments will be discussed by goal. Some of the accomplishments span across two or more goals; in those instances, the accomplishment will only be discussed once and not repeated. Statewide 2,016 new foster homes and 1,838 new adoptive homes were licensed/approved in calendar year 2014.

#### **Goal I: Continue and Expand Statewide Collaborative Initiatives to Enhance General, Targeted and Child Specific Recruitment for Children and Youth in Care.**

##### The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (DTFA) Partnership

To keep children with lengthy placement histories from lingering in the foster care system in Ohio and further assure the population of adoptive families reflects the ethnic and racial diversity of children needing permanency, ODJFS began a partnership with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption in July, 2012. ODJFS allocated \$2.3 million, including \$1.1 million in state funding, to hire specialized, child-focused recruiters whose sole mission is to find adoptive families or other permanency (legal custody/reunification) for older children in foster care. In state fiscal year 2013, the amount allocated was increased to just over \$3.4 million per fiscal year, and the population has been increased to include children in a planned permanent living arrangement (PPLA) status. The contract has just been renewed for state fiscal years 2016 and 2017. Using the renowned child-focused, *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* (WWK) program model, recruiters across Ohio work to match and place children between the ages of 9 and 17, who have been awaiting adoption for more than two years or those who are in the legal status of PPLA. WWK strategies include: an initial referral process; relationship building; in-depth case record reviews; child-specific family search efforts; assessments; child readiness efforts; network capacity building; and child-focused recruitment plans.

Outcomes directly relating to the WWK program continue to be realized. To date, forty-five recruiters under contract work to implement an aggressive, statewide recruitment strategy aimed at moving Ohio's longest-waiting children from foster care into adoptive families and other types of permanency. The model has been successful in finalizing 84 adoptions from July 1, 2014 through April 30, 2015, bringing the total to 148 finalized adoptions since the inception of the ODJFS contract, including several sibling groups. As of April 30, 2015, 909 children were enrolled in Ohio's WWK program. Since July 1, 2014, 136 children have been matched, bringing the total to 384 since the program's inception. There are 60 children in pre-adoptive placements. Just fewer than 10% of the children on current caseloads are in the PPLA status.

The program benefits the children who are most at risk of aging out of care. Children referred to the program include:

- older youth (the average age is 14, and 33% are sixteen or older)
- sibling groups (over 60% are part of a sibling group)
- 66% represent a minority race or ethnicity
- children who were in care many years before Wendy's Wonderful Kids (on average, 2,300 days)

- 10% had 10 or more placements prior to being referred to WWK
- 40% of the children being served are in a group home, institution or are incarcerated
- 9% experienced a failed adoption prior to WWK

Refer to the Update to the Plan for Improvement (Section III) of the APSR for additional information on ODJFS' partnership with the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption this past year.

#### Casey Family Programs Partnership

In state fiscal year 2015, Ohio began piloting Youth-Centered Permanency Roundtables in six counties. Ohio's pilot targets youth ages 12 and older that have been in care for 17 months or longer. Under this model, an initial Permanency Roundtable (PRT) is held with a trained facilitator leading a structured meeting that includes the caseworker, supervisor, and other agency and external consultants in a process designed to break down barriers to permanency. About a month later, a Youth-Centered Permanency Roundtable (YCPRT) is convened with the child and a support person of the child's choosing, along with the original stakeholders, to further shape the permanency action plan with the input of the youth. Follow-up Roundtables every 90 days after the initial YCPRT ensure accountability and allow the team to track its progress. The launch of the pilot has been successful, and Casey Family Programs and ODJFS will expand the pilot to five additional counties in state fiscal year 2016.

#### Family and Youth Law Center – Capital Law School, Columbus, Ohio

ODJFS utilizes the Family and Youth Law Center (FYLaw), formerly known as the National Center for Adoption Law & Policy, for additional recruitment purposes. FYLaw is responsible for staffing the Ohio Adoption Photolisting website (OAPL) in concert with AdoptUSKids.

OAPL highlights waiting children who are in the permanent custody of Ohio public children services agencies and for whom families are being sought. A photo and brief profile are listed for each child as well as caseworker contact information. FYLaw reviews new profiles as they are added to the photolisting to ensure all information provided about the children is appropriate and safe and also arranges for Spanish translations of profiles as they are added to the site. FYLaw's other OAPL responsibilities include responding to questions from OAPL administrators regarding use of the site, setting up usernames and passwords for new users, and maintaining monthly site usage statistics. In September of 2014, FYLaw began preparing a monthly set of 14 profiles of waiting children from OAPL for circulation within the ODJFS internal broadcast network. In October of 2014, FYLaw added a new feature to the site that tracks deleted child profiles, including data about the deleted child and the reason for removal from the site. FYLaw is scheduled to conduct a webinar for OAPL administrators to cover topics including: general introduction information about the photolisting, how to post and delete profiles, how to write effective profiles, how to increase the exposure of children/youth listed on OAPL, and other technical assistance-related information.

General information such as who may adopt, the adoption home study process, adoption subsidies available, costs associated with adopting, access to adoption records and information on interstate adoptions can also be found on this website. In addition, OAPL provides links to ODJFS publications such as the *Ohio Adoption Guide* and the *Adoption Subsidies Guide* and lists information about ongoing events, trainings and meetings, which FYLaw updates regularly.

As of April 29, 2015, there were 435 total individual child listings (321 active) and 65 total sibling group listings (31 active) posted on OAPL.

FYLaw responds to all new Ohio AdoptUSKids inquiries about adoption or foster care and continues to follow up with individuals with pending cases. A FYLaw staff attorney also serves as a direct resource for clients who contact AdoptUSKids directly with specific questions and conducts research to respond to these inquiries and provides appropriate referrals as needed. From June 1, 2014 to April 29, 2015, 694 new Ohio AdoptUSKids inquiries were made.

It is expected ODJFS will continue to collaborate with FYLaw, whose mission is to work within child welfare, adoption, and juvenile justice systems to support positive outcomes for children, youth, and families.

### County Adoption Incentive Payments

The Ohio Adoption Incentive Program was also created in 2012. This program provides up to \$1.5 million per year in financial incentives to PCSAs for finalizing adoptions for the target populations of youth under 9 and youth who are 9 and over. Each county's adoption finalizations for the target populations are averaged for the previous three-year period, and if counties exceed this baseline, they receive a funding allocation that may then be reinvested in future adoption recruitment and finalization efforts.

### **Goal II: Increase the Use of Effective Recruitment Tools at the Local Level**

Adoption and Foster Care staff at ODJFS have worked with local agencies as well as statewide and national partners to increase effective recruitment at the local level. In May 2014, ODJFS updated the *Ohio Adoption Guide*. The guide is a resource for potential adoptive families that helps give them the information needed to locate the right agency for them and that discusses the entire adoption process from inquiry to home study completion, searching for a child, being matched with a child, adoption subsidy information and post adoption services. ODJFS is currently collaborating with the Ohio Family Care Association (OFCA) to develop the *Guide for Ohio Resource Families*, which will be published by the end of 2015. This guide will provide a variety of information and resources for foster, adoptive and kinship families in Ohio.

ODJFS has worked with AdoptUSKids in a variety of ways this year. On February 25, 2015, staff attended the training *Data-driven Diligent Recruitment: Partnering and Prioritizing to Strengthen Your System's Use of Data*. ODJFS receives monthly reports from AdoptUSKids of children registered who need updated or removed from the photolisting. Adoption staff forwards this list to local agencies to ensure Ohio children on the adoption site are kept up to date. ODJFS also coordinated training with AdoptUSKids on January 30, 2015. The training covered the basics of how to utilize the AdoptUSKids photolisting website, register a child on the site, respond to inquiries from interested individuals, and search for families who may be potential matches for children in agency custody.

In addition to utilizing the services listed in Goal I, Ohio agencies employed several other strategies to recruit families for waiting children during this past year. Some of these included:

- Registering children with FYLaw and the U.S. Health and Human Services' AdoptUSKids Website;
- Placing information on waiting children on the local agency's website;
- Distributing child specific recruitment flyers at adoption events;

- Participating in the Statewide Matching Expo on July 18, 2014 hosted by the Northeast Ohio Adoption Resource Exchange. Due to the event's success, it is being held again on July 18, 2015;
- Hosting online virtual mixers designed to provide information to potential adoptive families about children available for adoption;
- Partnering with faith-based organizations to recruit families;
- Conducting searches for significant adults noted in the child's case file;
- Sponsoring "Foster and Adoption Parties" designed to provide information to potential families about foster care and adoption programs and the need for resource homes;
- Hosting foster and adoptive parent recognition banquets and other honorary events;
- Participating in adoption fairs;
- Profiling waiting children in newspapers, and on television and radio spots;
- Publishing agency calendars which feature harder to place youth who are available for adoption;
- Collaborating with community partners (e.g., schools, churches, service organizations) to promote recruitment events; and
- Working with foster parent associations to identify recruitment strategies and ensure retention of existing resource families.

As of March 1, 2015, Ohio had over 13,100 children residing in foster homes or other out-of-home placement settings. Of that number, nearly 2,800 children, are waiting to be adopted. Many of the approximately 1,100 young adults who "age-out" of care each year are without permanent connections. The data is significant in that it demonstrates the need to continually raise the public's awareness, to recruit additional foster and adoptive homes for the state of Ohio, and to support existing resource families, particularly those willing to care for foster youth on a permanent basis if needed.

Ohio has annually recognized May as National Foster Care Month and November as National Adoption Month. The purpose of the recognition is to acknowledge the efforts of child welfare practitioners and caregivers across the state responsible for providing care to children that have been abused, neglected or dependent. Public service announcements were prepared to recognize and celebrate both months. PCSA, PCPA, and PNAs are encouraged to continue to support their resource families. The Governor acknowledged adoptive and foster families and kinship families for the work and service provided. Across the state, events were held to honor foster and adoptive parents for their dedication to vulnerable children, including the statewide adoption advocacy day, held in Columbus, Ohio, on November 6, 2014.

In addition to special recognition during the months of May and November, agencies implement strategic recruitment plans aimed at promoting public awareness and/or foster and adoptive parenting. Pursuant to OAC 5101:2-5-13 and 5101:2-48-05, each foster care and adoption agency is required to develop and implement a comprehensive recruitment plan that describes diligent recruitment of families which reflect the diversity of the children for whom homes are needed. These recruitment plans are submitted and reviewed by ODJFS to ensure compliance with the Multiethnic Placement Act, 42 U.S.C.A. 1996 (B), as amended by Section 1808 of the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 (MEPA), and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) to ensure that Race, Color, or National Origin does not interfere with foster care and adoption processes. In addition, ODJFS requires that agencies conduct child-specific recruitment efforts in other counties when prospective adoptive families cannot be identified locally.

In circumstances of non-compliance, ODJFS provides technical assistance to the agency which includes, but is not limited to: the issue of noncompliance and needed revision(s), discussions about the basis of the regulation, and sharing information about other agencies' successful recruitment efforts. ODJFS also monitors MEPA compliance via onsite agency visits and recruitment plan implementation reviews. During this state fiscal year, technical assistance specialists and foster care licensing specialists conducted MEPA onsite reviews with 55 PCSAs and 45 PCPAs/PNAs that had contracts with PCSAs for foster care/adoption services.

ODJFS is also in the process of aligning the foster care and adoptive home study rules to promote dual licensure/approval of foster and adoptive homes. In the past, though each set of rules are similar as are the processes, they did vary in some ways. Local foster and adoptive agencies expressed an interest in having both processes aligned. Adoption policy staff within OFC started the process of aligning the rules in July 2014. In order to ensure the rule changes have maximum benefit to the agencies as well as the families they serve, ODJFS solicited input at a variety of meetings as well as through email communication with local agencies most impacted by the revisions. The rule alignment should take effect by the end of calendar year 2015.

**Goal III: Tailor local recruitment plans to customize general, targeted and child-specific recruitment efforts based on need.**

MEPA Biennial Comprehensive Self-Assessment Report

PCSAs, private child placing agencies (PCPA) certified to perform the foster/adoption function, and private non-custodial agencies (PNA) certified to perform the foster/adoption function are required to submit a *MEPA Biennial Comprehensive Self-Assessment Report* by March first of every even numbered year. One of the components of the self-assessment requires the agency to address the following:

- Whether its foster care and/or adoption recruitment plan includes information on efforts to diligently recruit foster caregivers and/or adoptive parents that reflect the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the population of children in foster care and available for adoption.
- Methods for targeting individuals as foster caregivers/adoptive parents where there is a disparity between the racial and/or ethnic groups of children in care and the racial/ethnic groups of foster or adoptive parents certified/approved currently.

The *MEPA Biennial Comprehensive Self-Assessment Report* is discussed during MEPA reviews of public and private agencies, which occur on a 24-month cycle. The discussion of recruitment efforts with PCSAs includes a presentation of data on children in the temporary and permanent custody of the agency by race and ethnicity as well as data on foster /adoptive parents by race and ethnicity. ODJFS staff and agency staff then determine if a disparity exists between the racial and/or ethnic groups of children in care and the racial and/or ethnic groups of foster or adoptive parents. If a disparity exists, further discussion occurs on what recruitment efforts will be used to reduce the disparity.

MEPA reviews conducted with private agencies (agencies that have contracts with PCSAs to provide foster and/or adoptive services) include a discussion of statewide data on the number of children in the temporary and permanent custody of the PCSAs by race and ethnicity as well as data on foster/adoptive parents by race and ethnicity licensed/certified by the agency. ODJFS staff and agency staff then determine if a disparity exists between the racial and/or ethnic groups of children in care and the

racial/ethnic groups of foster or adoptive parents. If a disparity exists, further discussion occurs on what recruitment efforts will be used to reduce the disparity.

As noted above, child-specific recruitment efforts are required when the custodial agency has yet to identify a family for the child. MEPA Cycle 5 runs from March 1, 2014 through February 28, 2016. At this point in the cycle, 423 child case records have been reviewed to determine if there were families presented at the most recent matching conference. If there were no families presented, the reviewers assessed whether the agency engaged in child-specific recruitment efforts prior to the most recent matching conference. Failure to engage in child-specific recruitment efforts would require the agency to develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP). Seven PCSAs were required to develop a CAP to address how they would come into compliance with the requirement to engage in child-specific recruitment efforts prior to the next matching conference. Child-specific recruitment efforts noted during reviews included:

- Registering children with FYLaw and the U.S. Health and Human Services’ AdoptUSKids Website;
- Placing the child’s information on the agency’s website;
- Distributing child specific recruitment flyers at adoption events;
- Conducting searches for significant adults noted in the child’s case file;
- Sponsoring “Foster and Adoption Parties” designed to provide information to potential families about foster care and adoption programs and the need for resource homes;
- Profiling waiting children in newspapers and in television and radio spots; and
- Publishing agency calendars which feature harder to place youth who are available for adoption.

**Goal IV: Include a Focus on Diligent Recruitment in Statewide CQI Efforts**

On October 20, 2014, the Deputy Director invited staff from Ohio’s 88 public children services agencies (PCSA) to participate in a variety of CFSP workgroups. One of the workgroups was the adoption group. The adoption workgroup was charged with exploring the expansion of the WWK program to youth under age five as well as to develop a survey for PCSAs to provide input regarding practices impacting timely adoptions and highlighting those who are successful in finalizing adoptions. The kickoff meeting was held on January 13, 2015. The group consists of staff from 13 individual PCSAs and 9 state staff. The county staff represent small to large counties and includes a mixture of adoption caseworkers, supervisors, administrators and an agency attorney. The state staff includes adoption policy, independent living policy, technical assistance specialists, licensing specialists, management and SACWIS staff. The group has developed a survey and will be sending the survey out sometime over the summer to all 88 PCSAs. The results will then be analyzed and steps moving forward determined.

**Goal V: Enhance Training and Information Resources for Prospective Foster and Adoptive Parents and Agency Staff**

The Ohio Revised Code (ORC) requires training for prospective foster parents and adoptive parents and requires ongoing training for foster parents. The table below identifies these key requirements.

	Preservice Hours	Ongoing Hours
Infant-only foster care	24	24 hours of training within a two-year certification period
Family foster care	36	40 hours of training within a two-year certification period
Specialized foster care	36	60 hours of training within a two-year certification period

In 2014, the OCWTP offered over 2,640 sessions for foster caregivers and adoptive parents, totaling 9,300 training hours, and over 41,300 participants (duplicated people) attended these sessions.

The map on the next page shows the number of foster parents and adoptive parents served in each RTC, and the number of sessions and training hours offered by each RTC for foster parents and adoptive parents.

Addressing Basic Skills and Knowledge for Foster and Adoptive Parents

The OCWTP determines the basic skills and knowledge needed by foster and adoptive parents through:

- Key informant interviews with foster and adoptive parents, caseworkers, assessors, and ODJFS staff.
- A review of state law and administrative code.
- Needs identified in Ohio’s CFSP 2015 – 2019.
- Literature reviews, presentations by content experts at conferences.
- Feedback from OCWTP trainers, RTC onsite visits, and a Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Work Team.

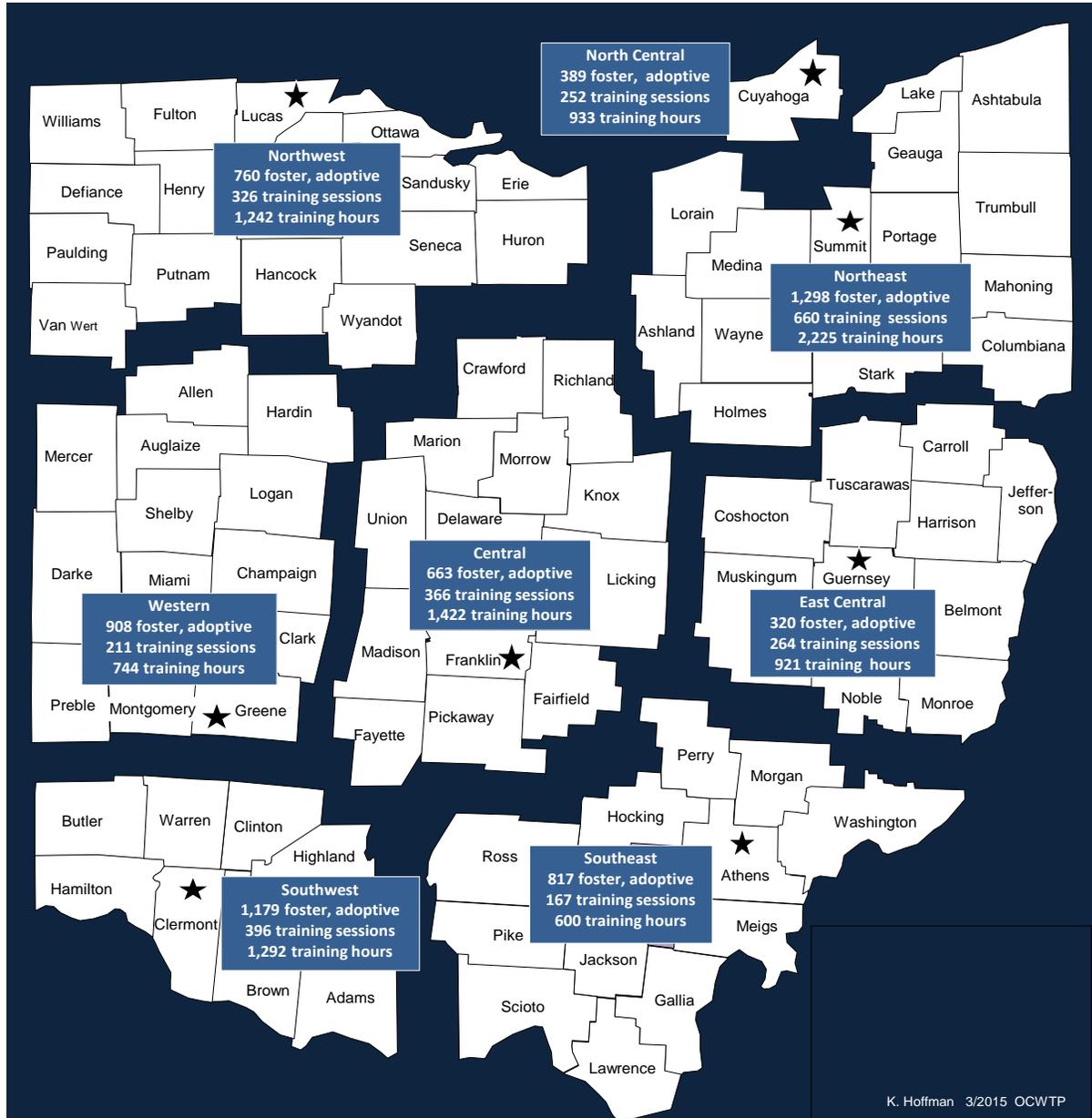
Preservice Training

The ORC requires prospective foster parents to attend 36 hours of “preservice” training. ORC identifies the topic areas to be covered in Preservice training for foster parents, and OAC identifies the topic areas to be covered in Preservice training for adoptive parents. The topic requirements have been organized into the following 12 three-hour modules:

Module 1 Orientation to Foster Care, Adoption and Kinship	Module 7 Transcending Differences in Placement
Module 2 The Child Protection Team	Module 8 Helping the Child Manage Emotions and Behaviors
Module 3 Child Development	Module 9 Understanding Primary Families
Module 4 Trauma and Its Effects	Module 10 The Effects of Caregiving on the Caregiver Family
Module 5 Sexual Abuse	Module 11 Long Term Separation from Birth Families
Module 6 Minimizing the Trauma of Placement	Module 12 Post Adoption Issues for Families

This map shows the number of foster parents and adoptive parents each RTC could serve, and training sessions and training hours offered, in 2014.

★ = RTC Host County



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NOTE: The OCWTP is mandated to provide training to all adopted families, public and private.

Data sources:

1. RTC Census Data, July 2014
2. E-Track Session Delivered Report 1/1/2014 - 12/31/2014 Revenue Code: Caregiver
3. E-Track Session Delivered Report 1/1/2014 - 12/31/2014 Revenue Code: Adoptive Parent

In 2014, over 100 rounds of Preservice training were offered statewide, with approximately 2,000 individual participants attending the Preservice modules. The OCWTP does not track the number of participants who complete Preservice and go on to become licensed foster parents, kinship caregivers, or approved adoptive parents.

#### 2014 – 2015 Revisions to Preservice Training

Preservice Modules have been revised to include content on:

- Trauma-informed caregiving, including brain development and toxic stress
- How the child welfare system functions, and the role of caregiver in reunification efforts
- The role of the caregiver in juvenile court
- Normalcy and the Prudent Parent Standard

In addition, OCWTP strengthened content in specific areas identified in the CFSP Visitation Goals, including:

- The importance of encouraging the parent/child relationship in Modules 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12
- The necessity of participating in the case plan goal of reunification in Modules 1, 2, 4, 9
- Mentoring biological parents in the process in Modules 1, 2, 9

Revised Preservice will be implemented across the state July 2015.

#### Foster Parent and Adoptive Parent Specialized and Related Trainings

Foster parents and adoptive parents can choose from over 850 different trainings in the E-Track system designed to address their skill and knowledge needs.

Although not required, the OCWTP works with Ohio's county agencies to encourage newer foster parents to attend the OCWTP's Foster Care Fundamentals series. This series builds on the learning provided during Preservice training to help foster parents go beyond an awareness level and gain deeper knowledge, understanding, and caregiving skills. While Foster Care Fundamentals focuses on foster parents early in their foster care careers, it can also benefit seasoned foster caregivers who display training needs in any of the competencies trained in the Foster Care Fundamental series.

The table below lists each of the Foster Care Fundamentals modules, the number of times it was offered in 2014, the number of people who attended, and percent of attendees who responded to the question of whether or not the training would improve their caregiving.

Foster Care Fundamentals	# of Sessions	# of Attendees	Survey Item: This training will improve my caregiving.			
			SA	A	D	SD
Cultural Issues in Foster Care: Dealing with the Dynamics of Differences	3	27	46	54	0	0
Defusing Crisis Situations Safely and Sanelly	6	65	59	41	0	0
Development of Adolescents: The Effects of Abuse and Neglect	4	69	77%	23%	0	0
Development of Infants and Toddlers: The Effects of Abuse and Neglect	4	46	38%	55%	0	6%
Development of Preschoolers and School-Age Children: Effects of Abuse and Neglect	7	65	43%	49%	3%	6%
Discipline in Foster Care: Managing Our Behavior to Manage Theirs	13	151	46%	52%	2%	0
Foster Families and How They Grow: Understanding the Effects of Fostering	10	125	60%	40%	0	0
Fostering Self-Foster Reliance in Children and Youth: Roots and Wings	4	27	50%	50%	0	0
Healthy Sexual Development of Children and Teens	2	19	20%	60%	20%	0
Recognizing and Responding to Children who have been Sexually Abused	15	219	48%	48%	3%	0
Relating to Primary Families: Challenges, Issues, and Strategies for Success	14	126	43%	49%	9%	0
The Caregiver's Voice: Being a Valuable Part of an Effective Child Welfare Team	2	30	63%	25%	13%	0
Understanding and Building Attachment	5	59	36%	49%	8%	8%

### Developing Skill

#### **Coaching**

Coaching is a personalized approach to helping individuals develop or enhance identified skill sets from a strengths-based perspective and in a safe learning environment. Whether the “learner” is new or experienced, a coach can help that person work on the identified skill sets. Coaching is available for foster caregivers. To date, the OCWTP has had 78 staff and caregiver coaches, and an additional eight executive coaches who work with county agency directors and attend the six-hour OCWTP training on how to be a coach. In 2014, the OCWTP provided 76 hours of coaching support to foster caregivers across the state.