



Community Based Care: Hardee, Highlands & Polk Counties

# Foster Caregiver Satisfaction Survey Results

2019  
April 2020

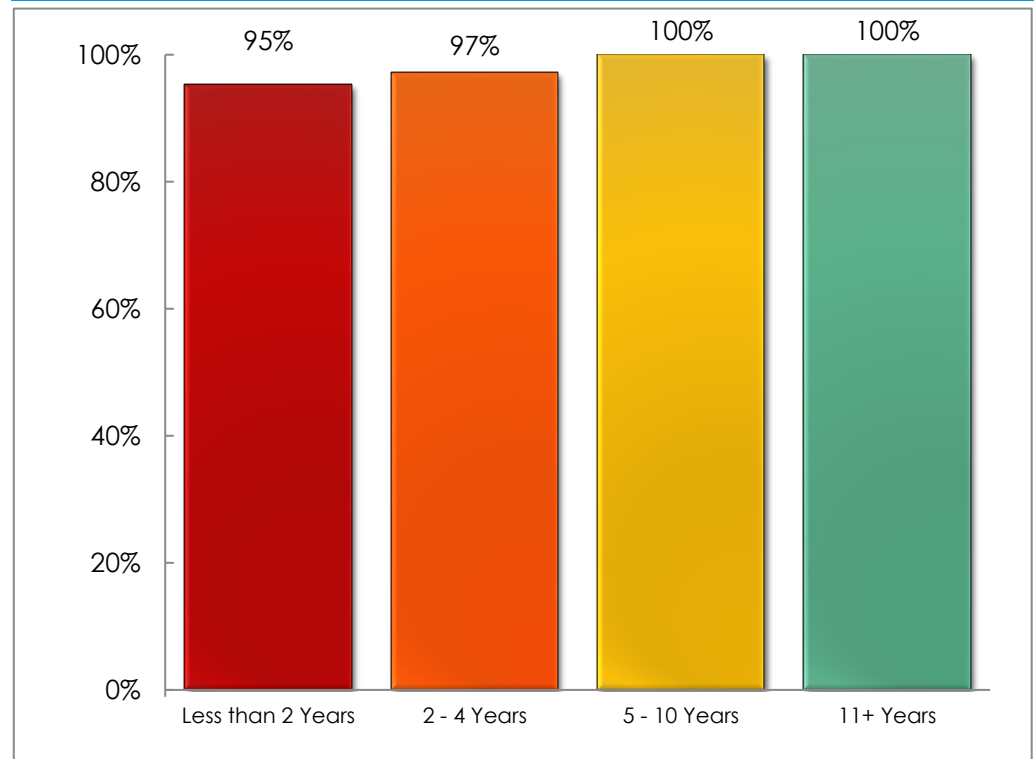
## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

LENGTH OF TIME LICENSED	PERCENTAGE
Less than 2 Years	39%
2 - 4 Years	33%
5 - 10 Years	19%
11+ Years	9%
TYPE OF FOSTER LICENSE	PERCENTAGE
Traditional	88%
Therapeutic - H.E.A.D.S.	6%
Medical	6%
COUNTY	PERCENTAGE
Polk	87%
Hardee	2%
Highlands	8%
Other/Unknown	3%
BY RE-LICENSING SPECIALIST	PERCENTAGE
Nicole Backherms	18%
Gwen Hinkle	12%
Cynthia Lanning	10%
Jonathan Martinez	12%
Elizabeth Petco	18%
Audrey Rodriguez	15%
Donna Segree-Lawson	15%

## SURVEY RESPONSE RATE

50% **50%** (112 Responses)

## 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	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1. As a foster caregiver who completed the Passport to Parenting Preservice Training within the last year, how satisfied are you with preparation and training provided to you?	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
2a. How satisfied are you with the interactions you have had with Placement Staff?	B	A	A	A	A	A	A
2b. With Case Managers?	B	A	B	A	A	B	B
2c. With Protective Investigators?	B	A	A	A	B	A	B
2d. Guardian Ad Litem(s)?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	A	B
2e. Heartland for Children Staff?	NA	NA	NA	A	A	A	A
3. How satisfied are you with the information received regarding the child(ren) placed in your home?	NA	NA	B	C	A	B	B
4. How satisfied are you with the follow-up/support calls that you receive after a child has been placed with you?	B	B	B	B	A	A	B
5. How satisfied are you with the training opportunities provided to you by HFC after your home was licensed?	B	A	A	A	A	A	B
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	B	B	A	NA	NA
7. How satisfied are you with the timeliness and accuracy of your foster room and board payments?	A	A	A	A	A	A	A

SATISFACTION QUESTIONS	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
8. If the child needed health care, access to primary health care?	NA	NA	NA	A	A	A	B
9. If the child needed dental care, access to dental care?	NA	NA	NA	B	A	A	B
10. If the child needed mental health services, access to mental health services?	NA	NA	NA	B	C	B	B
11. If the child needed mental health services, effectiveness of the service?	NA	NA	NA	B	B	NA	NA
12. If the child needed mental health services, quality of the services?	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	B
13. Overall, how satisfied are you as a foster caregiver with HFC?	B	A	A	A	A	A	B

SATISFACTION QUESTIONS	PERCENTAGE YES		
	2017	2018	2019
14a. Have you been invited to provide feedback on a child in your home at school meetings, staffings, court proceedings, etc.?	76%	NA	NA
14b. As a foster caregiver, have you been invited to attend school meetings and provide updates regarding the child(ren) in your care?	NA	92%	96%
14c. As a foster caregiver, have you been invited to attend staffings and provide updates regarding the child(ren) in your care?	NA	75%	78%
14d. As a foster caregiver, have you been invited to attend court proceedings and provide updates regarding the child(ren) in your care?	NA	82%	76%
15. Do you feel that adequate support services are available to you and the child(ren) placed in your care?	85%	90%	85%
16. Do you feel that you are considered a valuable team member caring for children?	82%	87%	89%
17. Do you feel that you receive good customer service from the child welfare system as a whole?	69%	74%	84%

18. Now that you are a foster caregiver, do you feel that you receive the same level of service as when you were being recruited/trained?	78%	84%	87%		
19. Do you feel that your service to children is appreciated by the child welfare system staff?	87%	80%	92%		
20a. Do you feel you have been treated as a full partner with Case Managers?	70%	67%	67%		
20b. With your Re-Licensing Specialist?	94%	94%	98%		
20c. With GAL(s)?	83%	79%	91%		
20d. With CLS?	70%	64%	72%		
20e. With Independent Living Coach?	100%	50%	82%		
20f. With Therapeutic Mental Health Provider?	67%	100%	83%		
21. In the past year, have you tried to recruit other families to become foster caregivers with HFC?	83%	78%	76%		
22. Have you worked with and supported the biological parents or other relative(s) of the children placed with you to achieve reunification when the goal was reunification?	89%	77%	87%		
Quality Parenting Initiative Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
23. My team works for the good of the children and puts their needs first.	47%	31%	16%	3%	3%
24. I know what is expected of me as a foster caregiver.	65%	29%	3%	2%	1%
25. The case worker and I have a respectful working partnership.	37%	43%	13%	5%	2%
26. Members of the entire child welfare team treat each other with respect.	36%	38%	19%	6%	1%
27. As a foster caregiver, I make normal decisions about the child(ren)'s participation in activities (e.g., social media, babysitting, family vacations, etc.).	62%	32%	4%	1%	1%
28. My experience is that transitions are handled in a developmentally sensitive manner.	32%	36%	21%	7%	4%
29. I work with birth parents.	32%	28%	29%	3%	8%

## COMMENTS BY QUESTION

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

It would be helpful to have more information regarding the role of the caseworker and what their role is in the case plan. It would also be helpful to be given contact information for individuals in Heartland who can help address issues with case management. A list of agencies who might contact foster families would be helpful. We did not know who CHS was until they called. It was very confusing working with CHS, Heartland and OMC. It would be helpful to know more about the different roles of each agency and contact info for each person responsible for specific roles.

Attachment - I've learned more about attachment by taking the TBRI Practitioner Course. Understanding my own adult attachment style would have been a benefit from the beginning. The Adult Attachment Interview process was very interesting and has helped me better understand why I react or am triggered by certain things.

I wasn't prepared for the lack of communication once our first placement arrived. The training was great, but I felt a little lost during the first few days. I think adding a little bit of who to call, and what to do on the first day would be helpful. Not in terms of parenting but with the administrative side of things.

Already had the training, moved from Miami.

I don't think any amount of training would fully prepare someone for some of the behaviors but it was very helpful.

I would love to see every one that deals with kids to have to take the class there is so much great info involved in this training class.

TBRI training should be included in all initial training.

TBRI should be included in the initial training.

I felt underprepared by the class for real-world circumstances surrounding our first placement.

A spanish course would be nice.

The only thing I would recommend would be more insight on teenage help. Most of the parenting training is pertaining to children and babies. We have fostered 5 teenagers and each time we learn something different, and I believe more insight for them would make more people want to help with their age group.

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

We have had a lot of issues with our current case manager, XXX, with CHS. She has an inappropriate relationship with the kid's biological mother. She has been enabling the mother and trying to make things look better on paper than they really are. She also has a conflict of interest because she had a relationship with the bio mom prior to taking her case. She has openly disregarded the judge's rules in regards to the case plan. For example, the judge made it very clear that bio mom is supposed to take the kids to public places or her aunt and uncle's house. However, XXX told bio mom, in front of the GAL and caregiver, that bio mom could take the kids wherever she wanted. Bio mom has taken the kids to her house, her friend's houses, her neighbor's, etc.□

□

Excellent Guardian Ad Litem, Patty Saylor!!! Unfortunately, the case worker, XXX, does not partner with her to do what is best for the kids.

I will never trust a caseworker.

I'm thoroughly impressed and satisfied with my relicensing person, Nicole and her supervisor, April, they had my back during a challenging time more than once. I like that they are straightforward. If my kiddos other supports were as forthcoming especially when the needs of the children are at stake, it would be great! A foster parent shouldn't have to beg for months to receive clearly needed supports for a child.

Placement staff: HEADS.

The first case manager did not provide much information and visits seemed to be inconvenient for her due to distance. I would ask for updates and she didn't have up to date information regarding the case. When a new case manager was assigned, it was like night and day. The new case manager had information and support.

Case Managers: Poor communication. □  
GAL: Never visited.

Everyone at Heartland has always been so helpful!

Communication between all parties involved in the system continues to be a hard struggle for me as a foster parent. I appreciate Heartland's efforts to continue to push for it to be better.

It is hard to group "case managers" into one group b/c the answer varies tremendously based on the individual case manager. Some have been excellent and others less so.

The team that I have is Great!! Always there for me with the best interest at hand. All done in a timely manner and most of all love the kids in the case that they have.

Heartland staff are always amazing, and very supportive. Thank you for all you do.

Everyone has been amazing but it would be easier if there was a general place for placements to document whether or not families were taking placements instead of having 3-4 different people from placements contacting them about placements if they're not taking any.

For the most part it has been a good experience. In six years I really only have one instance that I felt more support was needed and I didn't receive it. I don't know that there would have been a different outcome in that situation. In another recent instance my Re-licensing person and her supervisor had my back all the way and for that, it was greatly appreciated.

Case managers seem difficult to communicate with but that has been our only issue.

Everyone at Heartland has been amazing, but caseworkers, sups and one GAL have been very disappointing.

Working on 3 years it took us to get our homestudy scheduled. After all the hoops we jumped through it has been more exhausting then most anyone else has been through. To have an open home and all the knowledge it was heartbreaking to be pushed off time and time again. Until Susan Ripley stepped in and made us a priority in foster care. Thanks Susan for not making us feel like we were wasting our time.

The Protective Investigator really didn't keep us updated on anything and was vague with us.

They should also have a question for the therapist.

Miscommunication to no communication, unrealistic expectations are expected out of us from the Guardian at lifem and Case Managers. When we reach out to our case manager for things we need for care of the children, we have to beg or prompt for a response and wait forever for things to get done. We have to be "considerate" of their time because "they're" so busy. But when something is asked or required of us there is no considerations. We feel like we are looked down on, poked and prodded. I have been trying to stay strong for the kids sake, but we are mentally and physically drained and tired of being treated like we are the criminals.

HFC is the best. We get MOST of our support from them. We could not do this without their help!

We are seeing better communication with case management and us/placements, which is good. We hope to continue to see the growth between the agencies. We also appreciate HFC and their extremely dedicated services to standing up with/for the foster parents.

Very difficult to get answers from Devereux case management.

Courtesy worker has been excellent!

Relicensing specialist (Donna) is outstanding. Case Mgr. from Children's Home Society could communicate more.

I have had great case managers aka Michelle Oconnor and Karla Diaz with Devereaux, as well as 2 that were awful. I have a current case manager with One Hope United, that seems overwhelmed, and little gets done in a timely manner.

We are not licensed with Heartland so our communication with Heartland staff is limited so far.

### **Question 3: How satisfied are you with the information received regarding the child(ren) placed in your home?**

May need more training.

When the children were placed with us we were not given a lot of information regarding the oldest child's surgery that she had on her vagina. We were very concerned and contacted CHS. We spoke with our case worker and her supervisor. They told us that they were working on getting the doctor information. We followed up with them for months. They never provided it and we had to track it down on our own.

One page of details.

I am dealing with 2 different agencies. Devereaux has been very thorough with information and help. 2 of my current children were sent to me without the information about their needs, as well as there was a 3rd sibling in that group that needed more help than I as a traditional home should even have rec'd.

### **Question 4: How satisfied are you with the follow-up/support calls that you receive after a child has been placed with you?**

Received 1.

It took weeks for us to get child's court info and behavior report emailed to us. Cm still has not provided physical blue book.

Need to have more follow through when foster parents continually request additional services for the children in their home, do not wait until the situation becomes dire or a crises.

We received one follow-up/ support call after the children were placed. It would have been helpful to receive more support during the first few months of placement, especially since we were not getting support from case management at CHS.

I don't recall a follow up call after placements. But to be honest, we have only had 2 placements during the last year so I may have forgotten.

Love the feeling of support after placement.

### Question 5: How satisfied are you with the training opportunities provided to you by HFC after your home was licensed?

Might need more on that one. We need to reach out to them. □

We found it very difficult to find trainings due to lack of childcare and the trainings were always on the same nights, which were unavailable for us.

### Question 7: How satisfied are you with timeliness and accuracy of your foster room and board payments?

Wished we still received the paper copies of board payments mailed to our house □

I'm sure there is a reason for this, but it is a little difficult to manage when a child is placed into your care at the beginning of a month and you have to wait six weeks until the board rate is received. Thankfully we are fine but I think this a little hard when the first week of placement is when you spend the most money.

We only had the children from Friday evening to a Tuesday, not sure if we get any foster room and board payments. We did buy them some clothes and drive them to see family members twice.

I am not sure what the room and board payments should be, but we have received them regularly.

### Question 8-12: Health, dental, and mental health care services.

Had issues with receiving necessary treatment.

The mental health needs or service is taking too long to get service to the kids.

Mental Health: We asked to use a different service for one of our children, but he was awesome on helping us find someone else.

Getting the doctor approvals was a real problem for the first few months. They kept giving reference numbers for PCP changes but then the drs office said it wasn't set. This being the first foster child we had, I did not know what the insurance providers were and then they weren't authorized to speak with me. The case manager at the time did not provide information or do the updates in a timely manner. Once the relicensing specialist got involved, things went more smoothly. Nicole always had back up for us.

The teen we last had was in true need of therapy. The CM finally (months after requesting) was able to get her in but it was someone through an app on the phone who wanted to prescribe meds the first time they spoke (which she was against). And the court ordered therapy for her anger issues had a person assigned that we were told by our teen "just cracked jokes the whole time". I know this isn't an HFC thing, but it was a serious disappointment. □ Also, even taking in a teen who'd been in foster care for a while, we didn't get all of the information. That was aggravating. We could have done more or maybe better had we known more going in.

It was easy to get HEADS for mental health counseling but we decided to change counselors because he and our foster child didn't seem to build much of a rapport. We went with a local provider in Sebring who is excellent and accepts Medicaid - Amanda Hollywood at Abundance Mental Health Counseling. □

It's difficult to find pediatric dental services that accept Medicaid in Highlands. We had to go to Okeechobee for a dental cleaning. □

□

In order to use our primary pediatrician, we had to ask for a change of insurance. Our case manager made that happen but it caused a delay in services before we could get her vision assessed - she did need glasses and now has them.



We have been asking for counseling for our now five year old placement for months. We are still waiting. The case manager has just told us that she has now put in another referral.

It would have been extremely helpful to have more information from case management regarding the children's health insurance as well as dental insurance. I had to read the case file to figure out what doctor the children had seen and then the doctor told me what insurance they had. They were placed with us in May and I did not get insurance cards until August. However, the insurance was temporarily changed for the month of August to Sunshine and then in September it changed back to Simply. I contacted the nurse at Heartland and she was able to help get me the insurance cards, but CHS was not willing to help.

Health care: Terrible!

Case manager has not provided things like CBHA, medical cards, etc., without being asked several times.□

The time it takes for services to get approved and set up is not great. Having to fight with case workers to get a child what we know they need.

Heartland funded counseling for our bio child this year and the counselor did a wonderful job. We really appreciated this opportunity to help our daughter understand and cope with the uncertainties of foster care. □

□  
Heartland has always been incredibly helpful and supportive. □

Health care: Well, it isn't good to wait 2 mo for newborn.

We don't have any mental services or pediatric specialities available in South Highlands county, we also have to travel at least an hour 1/2 to take the kids to a decent dental office that take their insurance.

I'm waiting for counseling & speech therapy & tutoring for my current child.□  
Mental health: I would like & have asked for counseling for my child. I have not yet received it.

Requested change in pcp from cw- never followed up and informed me "it had been changed" when I reached out to follow up. □  
Requested mental health services for a child- never heard back. Requested several times.

Overall medical and dental have been ok. We are struggling with mental health and neuro. Especially in regards to behavioral issues and getting ABA therapy

It takes too long to get a referral for the kids with their overworked caseworkers. Maybe have someone whose sole position is to get referrals would be life changing for us.

The dental providers through the State programs are HORRIBLE. They do HORRIBLE work and have HORRIBLE client service. Making appointments and getting services approved takes an Act of Congress (sometimes an Act of God), and even then you get there and they can't do the work for whatever reason they come up with that day (crowns didn't come in and we FAILED to contact you, crown was made wrong and doesn't fit, etc.). One minute we need a referral for an oral surgeon, then next minute we don't need a referral, then we need a referral again but no one will give us a name, then they give us a list of names but none of them take Medicaid, then one child can get a referral but the other can't, and the list goes on.... If I had to rate dental services, I'd give it a negative 1,000, and that's being kind. We plan to just get the children on our private insurance plan and pay out of pocket because it's not worth the multiple trips and constant run-around.

Finding the services for health care/dental is often a challenge but the RN on staff is good at getting the information needed.

### Question 13: Overall, how satisfied are you as a foster caregiver with HFC?

I am overall satisfied with Heartland for Children. We have had a very difficult experience with the case management at CHS specifically, XXX, and her supervisor, XXX.

The first child was a learning experience and we will continue with another child and hopefully have a better understanding of everything this time around. Everyone from HFC has been excellent.

HFC is amazing. We've never had trouble or issues that have been an HFC thing.

I had a very difficult time & experience.

You guys have spoiled us by always being there and being so helpful when we need it. I have talked with foster parents from other states and even other parts of Florida. I know you guys are sadly not the norm. But I am so thankful for all you do to support us during anything that has come up. We know we can message and get the help needed whenever it is. Also so thankful for the tbr training and the extra convention training you all sent us to last year. It was very helpful!

I think Heartland does an excellent job supporting their caregivers. Gwen has been excellent to work with!

Foster Care is hard. It's worth it. Everything worth doing is rarely easy. We are pleased with the support and resources that have been available to us through this process. Being a rural circuit does make access to some services and available opportunities a challenge. If we lived in Polk rather than Highlands County, there would be more available. ☐

Donna and April from relicensing have provided a tremendous amount of support and a wealth of knowledge to me during this journey.

The kids make every bit of anything that may not have gone well 100% worth it.

Great staff and very helpful.

As previously mentioned, heartland (Gwen specifically) has been amazing and instrumental in keeping me on board as a foster caregiver. Every other entity in the system has earned a failing grade, both towards the caregivers as well as the children.

Overall I have loved the experience so far and am very thankful for the heartland staff who have been so helpful.

Once again we aren't licensed with Heartland so we don't deal with them directly.

### Question 14: As a foster caregiver, have you been invited to provide feedback on a child in your home at school meetings, staffings, court proceedings?

Staffings and Court Proceeding it was very rare they would invite me to staffings and I would have to ask about court proceedings. I would be told that I did not need to go because foster parents don't go to them that often. ☐

I rarely am informed about court in my FD case, CM was impossible to reach and never gave information when needed.

Not always informed by case worker but the GAL always lets us know

Not with our teen, received information after though

Staffings: Once I was invited.

Court dates have not been made available, was told that they would be.

I have not been invited. But I usually ask to be there at court. Or ask when the court dates are.

On one occasion I was told that I would be called into a staffing and then was forgotten. If there have been further staffings, I have not made aware. I was included in staffings for our previous foster child who left in May 2019.

Court proceedings we are not usually inform. Usually is after the fact.

I have asked to participate via conference call in the past 2 staffings for my current placement (sibling group of 2) and the CM (who is no longer with One Hope) did not call me or get me the info. The last staffing the GAL sent me the info to call in while the staffing was occurring. I have written a letter to the judge and have had some input in court proceedings (I attended the last JR), but I wish there was a better option for making sure the day to day life of the children was better represented in court. After 20+ years of being a foster parent I still feel like in the end even if the CM, supervisor, and GAL all agree on a plan of care for the child/children that it still boils down to what the Judge or Magistrate decide, even though they know little about the kids. It still seems more focussed on the parents rights/reunification, than what is in the best interest of the child.

Not in the beginning. No info was given about much

Case management is very lax on informing us about staffings and court proceedings. I have to request the information multiple times. This has been consistently with One Hope Bartow and most of the time with Devereux.

Although we didn't always get documents for the hearings and staffing.

It has only been one week.

sometimes

Staffings: Sometimes; if I ask.

Court: Not until I asked if I could attend.

Court Proceedings: Not for this child as yet - new placement.

### **Question 15: Do you feel that adequate support services are available to you and the child(ren) placed in your care?**

Already mentioned that therapy took a long time to get in and then wasn't what it should have been. (Of course this is an opinion)

Sometimes I feel like the services may be there, but that I am not educated on them well or even know they exist. The waiting lists for therapy is long. All kids taken from their homes have experienced grief and loss. We should expect them all to need some level of therapy. Understanding the opportunities and procedures for kids in EFC and PESS in the IL program could be communicated better.

As mentioned previously, our location is a challenge for services (dental and other specialities) as well opportunities provided by Heartland which mostly take place in Polk County. Of course, that's totally understandable given the population and our geographic area.

Obviously depends on the situation.

I feel like EVENTUALLY I am able to obtain adequate support systems, however, the process is tedious. It has taken me nearly 6 months to finally have regular early intervention speech services for my child. I wish I could have been able to arrange these things much sooner. The waiting lists for things like speech therapy and mental health services can be long.

Donna is great.

Depending on the child. One who threatened to kill himself (6 years old) and could not get help because could not get help for him as foster parent. Had to be case manager.

I have checked no but that was not the case with all my children, just a recent one. For the most part if I asked the child received what they needed.

Daycares are a huge issue in my area.

We are very much left in the dark about much of the support services that could potentially be offered to us.

This was my first time fostering and I was a little lost and confused on things. So we did our best. We only had the children for 3.5 days. April with Licensing was very helpful.

For the children yes, but no always promptly available.

Mostly - therapies very difficult.

However, some of what we need takes too long to achieve. IE counseling, therapies.

We have no local support services when it comes to mental, dental and any specialties.

#### **Question 16: Do you feel that you are considered a valuable team member caring for children?**

No, sometimes the caseworkers would make me feel like I'm just a babysitter and that I don't know what was best. Being told you are just a foster parent sucks when you are the one doing everything.

However, due to lack of communication, sometimes I feel like my time ends up being wasted in trying to get answers on things.

Liz Petko at Heartland has been awesome!

The One Hope team work collaboratively to meet our needs and keep us informed.

Last case worker treated us as just a babysitter and did not listen to the fact that we have been with the child over 5 years and knew her better than anyone.

I feel some case workers/agencies value foster caregiver input more than others. I have felt least included with Devereux but we have also had caseworker turnover with this agency which contributes.

There have been a few times where I haven't felt that way, but overall, yes.

Once again, Gwen and Heartland aside, I feel as though my opinion and thoughts are useless and not valued in the least.

Sometimes.

Most times.

By Heartland.

### Question 17: Do you feel that you receive good customer service from the child welfare system as a whole?

It was ok

HFC can't control everything.

For the most part, frustrating that case manager visits tend to be last minute. But we understand they are busy. Also have had some issues with the volunteer guardian ad litem. But overall I know everyone is trying their best!

I really do think that child welfare staff do care and work hard. But, it is hard to feel the effects of them having too many cases.

Hmm....I wish there was a sometimes button. ☐

There are so many pieces to the child welfare system. ☐

There are a lot of unknowns in foster care from our experience. I feel like we have the resources to navigate things but it's certainly not simple.

One bad apple can ruin the system

Again, this is difficult to group into one entity. MOST aspects, yes.

Need to respond faster when you call

Gwen and Heartland- Yes. All others- absolutely not.

We were not updated on things or checked up on.

Except for a few bad therapist and case managers from the different agencies.

Until I involved upper management.

### Question 18: Now that you are a foster caregiver, do you feel that you receive the same level of service as when you were being recruited?

There is always someone to help, when needed.

Absolutely! Whenever we need something from Jonathan he is always there for us and April has also always been super helpful! We absolutely feel like we are cared for as foster parents.

I receive better for the most part. Getting licensing was not an enjoyable process, but once I became licensed my relicensing person, Donna has went, I feel, out of her way to be helpful to our family. She takes calls, follows up, texts, and emails me in a timely manner with pertinent information.

Most times

Gwen is amazing, but every other aspect has fallen since training.

I feel it is much better and felt almost like a criminal when I was going through training with heartland adoption classes.

By Heartland.

We don't have any training or activities for foster families in South Highlands county.

**Question 19: Do you feel that your service to children is appreciated by the child welfare system staff?**

Everyone always thanks us for helping.

Somewhat

When it came to Nicole Backherms and Katelyn Davis yes.

Gwen thanks us EVERY time we have a conversation with her. Such a small statement goes a long way

People care, especially Heartland.

By heartland staff always.

Gwen and HFC aside, I feel as though everyone else could care less where the children are placed. We are simply a holding pattern for these kiddos when in reality we put our hearts and souls in to caring for these angel babies.

Sometimes.

Sometimes.

By Heartland.

**Question 20: 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?**

CM: No for One Hope.

All depends on the case

GAL: These were the worst, I never met them.

Case management sometimes depends on who it is and what agency.  
Just meet ILC for teen who will turn 18 in 2 months still no definite outcome yet.

Case management just has to do with communication and having to be insistent about receiving things.  
I've never had CLS even try to interact with me at all...even asking who I was.  
The IL staff have had much turnover and do not seem to be organized.

While we're not therapeutic, we do have our kiddo in counseling.

Our current case manager is leaving effective 3/12. She just began end of Dec/ beginning January. She did a great job, but like many excellent case managers, the caseload becomes unsustainable.

What is children's legal services?

I LOVE my re-Licensing Specialist! She is extremely supportive and encouraging. She is also very knowledgeable and helpful.

We went through many case managers as they leave to find other employment.

Only with a few case managers.

I have not had contact with many of these people yet.

Some of the case managers not all.

CM and other employees from CHS are not understanding my concerns on my child BN.

Sometimes.

GAL: At times.

### **Question 21: This past year have you tried to recruit other families to become foster caregivers?**

We do try

I will always tell everyone the children are great, the system is the system but it is very rewarding. I love what I do and wouldn't want anything different and would recommend it to anyone

Newly licensed.

Always trying!

We've talked to friends about becoming foster parents and one of the couples we talked to are thinking about it but they don't live in the counties that heartland serves.

I tell the people it is very rewarding

I am new in town and new to heartland but do advocate foster care to all I speak to.

I have, but no longer will.

I have many times.

### **Question 22: Have you worked with and supported the biological parents or other relative(s) of the children placed with you to achieve reunification when the goal was reunification?**

We always let the children know that their parents need a chance to do what they need to do as well.

I allow and monitor phone calls at their convenience most of the time.

In the past, we definitely have

Not at this time, no case plan in place yet.

We have only had one case where that was appropriate and sadly on their side anything we did was met with problems. But we will continue to try to work with any parents we can.

We tried. Mom asked for help to get clean early. We connected her to someone who has walked her road and now leads a strong ministry but Mom didn't return calls or follow up after several attempts. She's just not ready which is heartbreaking for her and our kiddo.

When it was best for the child absolutely.

One thing that became very clear is that finding affordable housing for some of these families is very difficult in this area.

I have two sets of children in my home. One set the parents have been TPR'd. The other set have been very inconsistent and are in the TPR process.

When they would me

Parents not involved

We worked with the bio parents, facilitating visits and forming supportive relationships. However, the mother continued to come and go and has surrendered her rights.

With our first two, we still communicate weekly, even after their reunification.

Trying to co parent.

Older brother has come by to fish with and play with foster children. We are Reaching out to bio mom through case worker but have not heard back yet.

I would be open to working with bio parents, however our cases thus far have had no parental involvement.

Relatives, no bio-parents

We only had the children for 3.5 days but we did visit mom and dad also visited Aunt and Grandma. Relatives seem to want to help more than parents

We work closely with ALL our bio parents, and I think the outcomes speak for themselves- all have been reunified. Co-parenting and support for the bio parents works, and it is crucial to their success. The only think I think the system needs to work on is after reunification. It is hard to justify keeping a case open more than 6 months or so after reunification, but I think that school and medical records need to be reviewed for at least a year, maybe two, after reunification. For one of my parents, as soon as the children went home, then they started missing days of school, and it was always something unnecessary. It's not egregious, and there is always an "excuse," but these parents are teaching an attitude of excuses for doing "just enough" or missing work / school when you just don't feel like it that day. Also, we need to help them stop parenting out of guilt. The parents undo a lot of the discipline we put in place, despite their best efforts and intentions, because they feel guilty. They end up giving in too much and allowing things they should not allow (e.g. missing school, messy rooms, declining grades, etc.) because they don't want to be "mean" to the kids because they missed a lot of time with them. One child who went home somewhat recently had perfect attendance, straight A's and had lost 50 pounds from emotional and lazy eating. Since going home, he has missed MANY days of school, is always calling to be "checked out sick," is failing classes and has gained all 50 pounds back. There has to be a way to keep this in check.

Very important if the parents are doing their part to get their children back.



Not applicable yet

Worked with previous foster children and currently working with XXX.

At first we tried co parenting, but all family has open meth charges so no contact is allowed now and mother is incarcerated

Co parenting is difficult when the parent feels we (foster parents) are against them, and the especially don't like that the children grow to love us but, with the help of HFC and CHS, it isn't as hard as it was in the beginning.

When the parents were willing.

Only one of my parents are able to reunify w/children. I keep in contact w/most of my other children & their caregivers.

Depending on the case.

I did with 2 of the siblings in my care. The newest 2, I have never met the parents, there is no communication, and they do not always go the weekly visits with the children, and did not show up at the JR I attended.

### **Question 23: QPI - My team works for the good of the children and puts their needs first.**

Case management has consistently shown that they are not doing what is best for the kids. For example, case management scheduled a dentist appointment for one of the kids during their nap time. Foster mom requested that case management cancel the appointment and allow foster mom to schedule during a time that was best for the child and when foster mom could provide transportation. Case management said that they would not reschedule because it was the best time for bio mom to attend an appointment. Case management arranged for transportation to the dentist during the child's nap time and bio mom did not show up for the appointment. Case management does not ask caregivers about their concerns regarding the children. When caregivers present their concerns regarding the children, case management dismisses the concerns.

Totally depends on what case you are asking about as I have 4.

When children are placed out of county they have to be transported for supervised visitations. Parents should have to do travel time.

There could be potentially more proactive (rather than reactive) steps to help support kids and caregivers.

The courts are slow and give the bio parents EVERY opportunity to turn things around even when they haven't taken the steps in the first 12 months of the case plan. It's been 16 months for our little one. I totally get it. I wish she would do what's required and get her life on track so she was able to raise her daughter. Our little one wants to be with her mom. But at the same time, her living in the in-between, not knowing which Mom is going to be there forever or where she can call home confidently is hard.

I believe as a general rule, our circuit is more pro-family preservation than pro-child. An example, our current case is being given a caseplan after 4 previous TPRs. I am not confident that is "good" for the child at this point.

Amount of work vs time is to consider.

Most do.

With the exception of Gwen who has been the only person who wanted to hear the child's perspective, nobody has bothered to listen.

Heartland outs Children's needs first however our circuit courts always seem to put parents rights before a child's best interests.

Parents needs are definitely prioritized over the child's best interest in our circuit.

With the exception of Heartland's leadership.

#### Question 24: QPI - I know what is expected of me as a foster caregiver.

The role of the caseworker is a little bit unclear so I do not always know what my role is because the case worker makes decisions about the kids without consulting me in regards to what I think is best for the kids.

#### Question 25: QPI - The case worker and I have a respectful working partnership.

She is AMAZING!

I don't trust them.

I communicate respectfully to the caseworker, but she has not been respectful with me. She was disrespectful to me during my meeting with her and my licensing specialist. The licensing specialist addressed her disrespect and confronted it directly.

With one case absolutely, with another I have not received proper communication. Not the CM is switched and things are getting better.

As a person she is great, we love her.

The case manager complains about her job.

The new case worker is good but the last one was beyond terrible.

There have been times, with certain caseworkers, that I have felt kept out of the loop.

My caseworker was at Wyshana Thompson at Dev. is the best I've ever had. Keeps me informed and goes over and beyond in making sure the kids are taken care of. It showed in her work the care and love of what she does.

Our current case manager Lisette has been the best we have ever had. She cares for our foster son as if he were her own and listens to us and to him.

At times the caseworkers don't return calls, don't always take care of referrals in a timely manner, They don't keep you updated on our kids.

I've had some that couldn't have done more and then there were times not.

Gwen is great.

If our opinion was actually valued, our current cw would have been replaced. He is rude to both caregivers in this household, told us he hoped he was not our caseworker permanently, and has been caught yelling at children he was transporting. He is absolutely deplorable and unprofessional.

The caseworker from One Hope United had poor communication and was unprofessional.

No case worker currently.

Some of the case manager from the different agency are not supporting and work against the foster parents.

I have issues with the one for BN.

"Relationships" don't exist w/o communication.

**Question 26: QPI - Members of the entire child welfare team treat each other with respect.**

I have been disrespect by caseworkers

Who is all on the child welfare team?

Some have no communication.

sometimes have a hard time with case mangers.

It appears that nobody listens or communicates (Gwen not included- she has been great in attempting to communicate with the entire team).

We had several caseworkers.

I cant really answer this question as I have no way of determining if they respect eachother ( we aren't around the members).

No placements.

With the exception of Heartland.

**Question 27: QPI - As a foster caregiver, I make normal decisions about the child(ren)'s participation in activities.**

We wanted to take the kids with us on our family vacation and case management denied submitting a request to the judge.

NA so far.

Due to the nature of the medical kids that I have in my care everyone has to be on board as far as decisions in activities babysitting things of that nature.

I feel very restricted as a foster caregiver. We cannot even plan a proper family vacation as there seems to be a lack of cooperation from some parts of the team.

When I try to I get yelled at by the Guardian at litem that they are not my kids.

**Question 28: QPI - My experience is that transitions are handled in a developmentally sensitive manner.**

They tried to take one of my children and just send her to live with a family out of state without any transitioning.

Bio dad has not been in the kid's lives for almost a year. During a permanency staffing, case management requested that the caregivers begin to manage over the phone visitations between him and the kids. Caregivers did not think this was appropriate given the lack of involvement he has had with the kids and the transition needed to be handled differently. During the JR, the following week, the judge agreed that when dad began to work on his case plan, then visitation with him should be managed very carefully.

Sensitivity could have been a bit more thoughtful in working with the 18 year old placed with us.

We had a case recently who was told that they would be rejoining their sibling- placement does not want to and this made them very upset. CW (per placement) was very callous and does not listen to placement.

The transition schedule was not followed and was rushed.

CM & CM supervisor negligent.

### Question 29: QPI - I work with birth parents.

Always or often, what ever is best for the children.

We have invited bio mom to be involved in church and other regular weekly activities. We FaceTime her and text her regularly. We were initiating with her for a long time and finally our licensing specialist told us to back off and allow her to initiate. We now wait to hear from her and then include her in whatever is going on at that time (park, out to eat, etc.). Our co-parenting relationship was going well until the new case worker, Angela Forte, began to discourage co-parenting from taking place. She gave the bio mom an out so she started engaging with the kids to the bare minimum.

When available, we are all for co-parenting.

She was not engaged.

Case dependent and birth parent dependent. We try our best though!.

Mom has taken no steps in her case plan which makes it very difficult. In the beginning we offered to help with connecting her to people who could help with treatment and healing but she never followed up. Mom is not difficult but she is a drug addict who grew up in the system and doesn't have the experience to know she can be well, the extended family support to make it a reality nor the willingness to take the first step of treatment.

The birth parent is in a different state.

Unless they are violent.

I am open to it, it just doesn't fit the situation.

Unless we aren't allowed to because they are unsafe.

We make the attempt to contact, then not any return calls.

Until there have been some setbacks and we've had to reduce contact.

Parents have not been an active part.

Very Interested in it but haven't had the chance yet. Case worker is reaching out for us to see if bio parent is interested.

Even after reunification we're still in communication with the birth parents.

We have only had her for a week so there has been no opportunity.

I will work with parents who are not disrespectful.

Bio mom is incarcerated.

N/A - not yet.

### Question 30: How would you describe your foster caregiver experience with Heartland for Children to a friend?

That we enjoy being able to help families going through some bad times. That helping others not only helps the families but our society in whole. (It takes a village).

Excellent.

A rollercoaster of emotions, but fully supported & cared about.

I would tell them that it is a great way to help children but you can not trust caseworkers and that it is all about the parent and not the child. I would not be a great spokesperson.

Rewarding.

Our experience has been a wonderful journey. And glad we have the opportunity to help. Definitely encourage others to learn more.

My experience as a foster caregiver has brought out emotions and feelings I didn't expect. I didn't expect to be so emotionally attached/involved. I worry about this child and advocate for this child like she is my own.

I've had a good experience so far, so if you have time, a good heart, and extra space in your home please give fostering a try. It truly takes a village to raise the children of our future.

Mostly positive and fulfilling.

Great.

Challenging yet rewarding.

Be careful

That Heartland for Children is very fair, I have establish a great relationship with my license specialist; she always asking if I need anything and if their anything that the child need. I also will tell them that it can be very challenging working with the child/ren in your home;and that you can experience happiness, joy and some very frustrating days but over look the behaviors pull out the good and sweetness, their strength and talents, be there to help them with social skills, to let them know that they are safe not only tell them but show them, treat them as part of the family even when the behaviors comes on. I will tell them to remember we have children that has been abuse physically and mentally, they had been neglected by the very one they trusted, they have seen and witness somethings that we as adults have never gone through. Heartland for Children have been a great advocate for the children.□

Lovely and supportive. I have given so much information out to many about becoming a foster parent. Being open and honest about how difficult it can be, but so rewarding. Explaining the continued support and care I recieve on a daily for my licensing agency! Not one bad word I could say about Heartland. Huge support from my licensing worker! She is wonderful and always there for me.

Its been AWESOME, the last 20 years we have been so blessed to be a part of so many young lives and to see that they had a chance for a healthy, happy life. I tell all my friends that they need to become foster parents.

Challenging but rewarding. We are newer foster parents so we have had struggles but if you have a strong family support system, it can make all the difference and don't be afraid to ask for help.

Most challenging at times but FAR more rewarding than any of the obstacles. Heartland is a great support system

Heartland for children is very supportive to its foster parents. Foster parenting is hard but Heartland makes it possible.

HFC seems to really care for their foster parents. While not everything is perfect, HFC is supportive of us while we care for our bonus kiddos.

Heartland has been great and I have been licensed in another county. It all depends on case management

I believe that Heartland is great. It's the CM and their agencies that I sometimes have problems with.

Extremely disappointing - My feelings were children were dropped off and forgotten.

Becoming a foster parent is a good experience for the kids and that they can be a blessing and make a difference in their life.

Unable to determine yet - newly licensed.

Heartland really cares about you as a foster parent. They will have your back and be there for you throughout however they can. This is not always the case with other agencies. They care and if you need something do not hesitate to ask!

It's the hardest but best thing I've been involved in. We are passionate about bringing light to dark places in the child welfare system, and we are committed to serving these families by loving them and their children.

Heartland has been great!Foster care itself is hard. Again, totally worth it, but hard. You have to be willing to walk headlong into brokenness and recognize and treat your own brokenness in the process. It's brought our family closer, caused strife, brought healing, grown us individually, and grown us as a family. Every child deserves the love of a family.

they are very respectful and friendly . .they are also very knowledgeable in the work they do..

People we know see what we have been through and how this can tear a family apart. The trauma that a child now has due to reunifying a child with a violent bio parent is horrible to have to see. The system fails these kids and don't listen to the people that know the people involved. I couldn't wish what we have been thru on anyone.

I honestly don't.

Experience with Heartland is excellent, however dealing with Case Management is reason enough for us to not want to continue fostering after our current placement. Lack of respect for us, our time, our lives and a real 'we work for them' mentality.

Fulfilling endeavor to help out with children in bad situation. To make life easier in their transition.

A roller coaster of emotions. Endlessly frustrating, Overwhelmingly rewarding, Absolutely worth it.

A great place to Give that to children you are respected you are hurt you are a force for the children they can't speak for them selves the ass I cannot say in the years that can I do you are a valuable member of a team and you have pretty much full range as if they were your own I love what I do

Good.

Good.

HFC licenses the foster home.

Foster care has been the hardest and most rewarding experience of our life so far. We hope to be apart of it forever.□

Awesome experience.

Exhausting but worth it. I always say it's the hardest but most wonderful thing we've ever done.

It is very rewarding and you have a very good filling when when they run up to you and give you a big hug

Very good.

Supportive and rewarding.

Fostering can be challenging, but Heartland is incredibly supportive and ensures that you have the resources you need to be successful.

These children are a blessing in our lives and that we can't imagine a life without foster children.

Rewarding but exhausting.

Only been with heartland a few months but the experience has been great as well as dealing with the staff has been extremely pleasant.

Just knowing that I can help a child have a better and happier life, wether it be unification or just giving them a place to call home, makes it well worth it.

Great training and support from Heartland.

Heartland has been amazing and being able to play a part in caring for a child in need is so rewarding. Every other aspect is less than great, but just keep in mind that in the end, you are caring for kiddos, and that surpasses any poor treatment from other entities.

Great to work with Heartland.

Very supportive.

Hardest job I have but the most rewarding! Gave generic information about what I do above and beyond normal parenting.

Heartland is wonderful and 100% for the safety of children first and foremost ,they have a lot of support for the fostercare families and the bio parents as well.

We so speak highly but don't actively recruit.

Awesome. Everyone is very kind and supportive

Incredibly rewarding.

Heartland is very helpful. They are always there to answer questions and provide resources when needed.

It has been very pleasant. We just got licensed on 2/28/2020. Everyone seems like a great support system

It is hard but rewarding and more good people are needed.

I feel like I don't have a full understanding of the process yet, but I have described it positively. But also am honest about the fact that it feels like a lot of the work and responsibility to figure things out and find important information falls on the foster caregiver.

It's great. HFC is SUCH a blessing and an amazing support system. They make this process as easy as it can be, considering what it is.

Great so far.

It is the most rewarding thing I do. Even with all the barriers in the end what is best for the child is achieved. Everyone is on the same page which makes all goals achievable.

You start off wanting to help the children, but the staff makes it mentally and physically exhausting.

Pretty rewarding.

Very welcoming , very informative and very helpful when it comes to the needs of a child as well as our needs

There are some good and bad about the foster care system. However, Given the opportunity to protect a child/children for a short time "Priceless and Rewarding"

It's hard but worth every effort and tear you may have to make a difference in a child's life!

HFC as an agency is dedicated, and forth coming. They offer support, and guidance for all questions and concerns. They help you understand the circumstances you will face, and offer training tools to place you with the information and knowledge needed to help the children.

Great experience, making changes on one life.

Love working with kids.

Fostering is a joy as well as a blessing. My heart is full as the babies turn to toddlers. Their smiles & just seeing their expressions of happiness and of feeling loved - PRICELESS!!

I just describe my own experience. Learn new skills every day!

Wonderful experience.

Serving with joy, and loving the hurt.

Supportive, involved.



Heartland for Children is a wonderful organization.

It gives me a chance to be a positive influence in the children's lives.

Eye opening, ups/downs.

It's a great opportunity to help children have a safe haven.

Rewarding as caring for the kids.

Absolutely wonderful. Everyone is helpful & responsive to children's needs.

Heartland seems to really care about getting the best for these children. I especially endorse Liz Petko, who goes way above and beyond her position as a re-licensing specialist. She is my go-to and never fails me person.

The system is going to fail however we don't become foster parents for the frustrations of the system. We do it for the kids so they can get a chance of what a real family is suppose to be like and be loved.

It is a very great place for children to be placed in a very stable invirment

### Question 31: How do you feel about being a Heartland for Children foster caregiver?

We enjoy every day. We enjoy helping families and the children enrich our lives in many ways.

Excellent.

I have enjoyed it. I love my kiddos & their families. Our case manager Angela Findley has made this a great experience.

I really liked it in the beginning but realized that the system is set up to put kids back with parents that don't need them. The system gives parents opportunities after opportunity when they show over and over that they do not care and it ends up leaving the child in the system.

We are very happy to be a part of Heartland.

Heartland for Children has been great. Just wish there were more resources offered in Highlands County.

Good and they have been helping me with all of my needs and requests.

While challenging at times, it's still rewarding.

I love it.

Proud and tired : )

Scary and thrilled

Great!!

It is one of the most trying things I've ever done, but I feel so blessed to be able to help the children. I have seen many sides of foster care over the last year. Parents reunification as well as possible TPR. All I can say is through the drama therapy is always a friendly smiling face to help me bounce back. I never feel like I'm in this alone and if I EVER have an issue my relicensing worker is never more than a call, email or text away. I LOVE what I do! I have heard horror stories from foster parents from other agencies (especially medical FP). I consider myself blessed to work with Heartland!

We LOVE IT its such a blessing to be able to help a child and so rewarding.

Our journey is just starting and we look forward to continue.

We love it and hope to make a difference in many more lives through the years

I feel honored to be a foster parent and proud to be Heartland for children foster parent.

I like HFC. I like being able to provide a safe and loving home for children in need. Win-win.

Wouldn't change it but sometimes there is that moment but you just keep pushing along

Great.

I have not taken on other children. I was extremely disappointed.

Love it been the best journey.

Excited to provide loving & nurturing care for children.

I love it and I am so thankful to have this opportunity.

I am very proud to partner with HLFC!

Grateful for the opportunity. God brought us into this. We were tip-toeing in. We did not set out to be foster parents. And we certainly didn't set out to consider adoption. But every little yes has led us to where we are today. Only God knows what's next.

Good.

Disappointed.

Excellent.

Love the children and advocating for them. Love dealing with Heartland and feel supported and respected by them.

Great opportunity.

We are happy to have chosen Heartland as our licensing agency. We have been pleased with the support we have received particularly by Lyz Petko and the placements team.

Great!!

Good helping little person that need help.

Good. We try our best to give the name Foster Parents a good reputation.

It's hard out here in Davenport, sometimes. It feels like we're so far from things that are going on in Bartow or Lakeland. There are a wealth of resources in that area, so when the newsletters and flyers for activities are emailed I generally know it's not something in bartow or Lakeland.

I love helping the kids and the parents.

I love it

It's great

It feels good, especially because our Relicensing specialist, Gwen, is so great. She never rushes us, has always followed up on all of our concerns and has really listened to us and helped guide us along the way.

I love it.

Great! It's a hard thing to do.

Wouldn't change it for the world. We adore Heartland.

I am proud to be part of an organization that values and supports me in this foster journey.

Good.

So far I am proud to be part of Heartland.

Good. Still in week 1 of our first placement so a little overwhelmed but that should be normal.

It feels great!

I enjoy working with HFC.

great

Proud of being part of helping children in need.

Heartland does a really good job. We've always had a positive experience with Heartland!!

Good.

It's not easy being a foster parents but Heartland has been amazing we KNOW that if we need anything they are a phone call away.

It's a very rewarding experience.

I love being a foster parent and I love Heartland.

It's better than working directly with the government.

Love being a caregiver.

I love being a foster parent, I did not realize how rewarding it was.

Excited and ready.

We love the opportunity to be a part of a families story during a difficult circumstance. We still have communication with some previous families and are so thankful to continue relationships with children and families that became a part of our family.

I have enjoyed it so far.

Good.

I love it, and I couldn't do it without the support we get from HFC.

I truly love what I do.

I am proud and sad. My heart goes out to the kids.

It's nice.

I love it.

Great.

We love our babies and are so blessed by them!

It is one of the most hard but rewarding jobs, I have ever done.

Amazing. Working as a team and learning everyday from my providers.

I love working with the kids.

I love being a foster parent! The people I meet are so helpful - CBHA, Early Steps, numerous staff, and so willing to explain the what next.

Good.

Enjoyed every day.

Great.

Honored.

I feel fulfilled. That with their support we are able to help & love the children while in our care.

It can be challenging, but rewarding.

It feels good to have a positive affect on children.

Left out, unsupported.

Fantastic!

It's a unique experience that changes your life.

I think that they really try to support me, and these children. I feel good about being with Heartland, and try to promote them to those who inquire about foster care.

I feel great to be able to do things for a foster child it gives me joy to be able to do so.

### Question 32: What are the biggest everyday challenges you face as a foster caregiver?

All of the appointments for the children but we understand it needs to be done; goes with the responsibility (doctors, etc.).

Dealing with the case manager or XXX (Devereux).

The length of cases with no end in sight.

The hardest challenge is falling in love with a child that you may have to go back to the bio parents. I am all for the child going back when the parents do what they need to do but not when they only care about themselves.

Time. With our new jobs we don't feel like we are able to give the quality time that we used to.

Balancing schedules.

I enjoy my role. However, I struggle with guiding and directing a child who hasn't been raised in the same environment as my child and exhibits behaviors I'm not accustomed to. Trying to be fair in punishment to my child and the foster child at the same time is difficult. What works for one doesn't work for the other and at times appear to be partial to one or the other. And I question myself as to whether I'm being fair to all involved...often.

Having to comfort a child after returning from a visit with their parent(s) because they love them and miss them. Also, teaching a child how to properly verbalize how they feel. It challenging but when you see a breakthrough it worth your time and effort.

When the child is frequently suspended from school.

Time.

Having enough time & patience.

Accusations and team support

I think I express it in a different question.

The actions of my hurt children. Dealing with their behaviours as they cannot understand why this is happening to them. Also the biological families and taking a lot of their fears and frustration out on me. I understand where they are coming from, but at times I feel like I get the short end of the stick from both the children and parents. I continue to support them and keep open communication through it all though.

Wanting to make sure they get a forever home

The biggest challenge was just wondering if we are doing the right things all the time. We didn't even know what kind of questions to ask and were placed with a child with behavioral problems we had to learn to deal with effectively.

I wouldn't say I have everyday challenges. But most often time is an issue when you have several children (esp in different age groups) that need to be in different places at the same time and our work schedules. But we always figure it out together.

Not being treated with equality by the GAL and their organization not correcting the issues.

We are on hold now due to my daughter's medical condition.

It's a 24/7 job for the good and the bad but the kids are worth it

Receiving support from CM. Need mental health services for child, need tutoring, need to be able to take them to doctor or dentist. Current kids with me 4 weeks, no support, no GAL.

Very little communication unless I demanded.

Just trying to be a good example for the kids.

Honestly the hardest challenges are just part of parenting. I feel like we have a lot of ability to say yes to our foster kids under normalcy. And I really appreciate that. I wish there was not the not so great homes out there. I know some of the challenges we face are due to the trauma received from those homes. I know you guys work hard to find them and close them. It's just frustrating and sad to hear some of the things that other homes do as far as how they treat foster kids. As if they are not part of the family. That's not something you can fix but I am glad you have more and more who do like us and count them fully in.

Every child is complex in their needs. Lining up visits, services, appointments, and anything that involves relying on others to do their part can be frustrating with the communication gaps.

Reconciling our own attachment styles and trying to understand our kiddo's attachment style, history, behaviors, likes and dislikes, reactions and responses. In our bio family, we've been navigating life together for over 14 years (with kids). Even if it's not always fully functional, we know each other's rhythms and histories. When you add a new person, nevermind a kid from hard places, into your home, the rhythm changes, personalities collide. Security is challenged. Identities shift. It's a lot to figure out as a family while at the same time caring for and protecting this new little person who desperately needs safety, stability, and love.

Dealing with the emotions that the child/children have.

Treated as if the child is just a name on a piece of paper.

Time for myself.

Lack of support and respect from Case Management. Demoralizing to see decisions being made directly against the best interest of the child to save them time/effort.

Dealing with trauma to children's behavior.

1-finding daycares/school settings that can manage behaviors and issues associated with trauma...being trauma informed□

2-wishing we could help more children than what our car/home allows□

3-poor communication between all entities, sometimes at the expense of the kids.

None!

Doing the best to help my children.

Obtaining appropriate therapy.

Knowing all the answers and not feeling dumb for asking something maybe I should know.

So many people involved. Being a medical foster parent brings in extra people. It can be overwhelming at times.

When they cry for their parents after a phone call.

To get help from caseworkers and their supervisors.

Not having the control over certain things like getting a therapist. Or being able to easily access medical records due to a name change.

The children are very good when you talk to th

Not knowing child's struggles/background

It depends on the case.

Case managers who do not follow through with requests. Case managers who wait until the last minute to try to do a home visit and expect us to arrange our appointments and schedules to accommodate them although we ask them to schedule ahead of time. Case managers who tell us that they don't have time to help supervise visits with difficult parents/cases and refuse to show up for visits.□

Pretty much case managers. The quality of case managers over the last two years has severely declined.

The biggest challenges were handling the many various behavior issues. Different with each child.

So far I have not experienced any challenges. It's been a good experience thus far.

Finding child care.

Getting everyone up and out on time for school, and bathed and down for bed.

Hoping that I have a positive impact on the lives of the children I care for.

Sometimes we struggle with work schedules and coordinating care, but it is always handled with our great network of fellow foster parent friends.

Time for self.

Dealing with birth parents who continually make poor choices and drag their feet.

The only issues we've had so far was one caseworker from one hope united. Everyone else has been great!

Not feeling supported by case management, GAL, and HFC.

Not having enough support from the community as a whole.

Communication to the team as a whole.

Just the emotional side of what the kids are going through.

Communication with case managers but I feel it is because they are so overloaded with kids they just can't keep up. They want to they just have too many things to do at once.

The fear that the wrong choices will be made for the children by someone who only looks at the case for a few minutes and doesn't understand what's at stake.

Working with some of the caseworkers is challenging.

Schools not understanding trauma. That is my number 1 issue.

Mine was getting back in the swing of things with having younger children in the house.

I don't feel experienced enough to answer this thoroughly. But right now it is not that challenging.

Parenting someone else's children.

Excessive medical and dental appointments and having to take off work to get the kids there. Transporters are a big help, but a lot of times the parent needs to be the one going so the parent can convey all information and ask questions about future needs, etc. It would be helpful if transporters take the children that they call the foster parent while the doctor is in the room and give the parent the opportunity to hear the doctor's diagnosis, thoughts, etc., and be able to ask additional questions.

The turnover of CM and system issues.

Dealing with the staff and the family members of the children.

Balance between school and home life.

Raising a child who was raised different from you.

My biggest challenge would be the length of time in foster care.

When we have court multiple times a month it is very frustrating that the foster families aren't considered.

Co-parenting and discipline- most of the children have never had it and it is hard to maintain order and consistency when parents don't also put forth the same guidelines.

To provide the best for my kids and teach them properly.

That I don't have anyone to back me up.



Trying to get answers from case managers. I know they are extremely busy as well; it would be awesome if "some" were to acknowledge a text.

Protect my children from the outside world, danger.

None.

Pure frustration of how neglected these kids come to us.

CM and others in the system with the answer of "this is just the system" to EVERYTHING!

I can't think of anything specific. Every day presents a different challenge but nothing that's not handled.

Helping children get through their physical and emotional hurt.

Sometimes my space invaded.

Getting attached and knowing you may not see the child again.

Not getting support and respect.

I really don't face challenge as my husband & I work together to help every child overcome their experiences. We recently had to make a choice between 2 siblings to help the older one to protect the little one as the older child who was abused had become the abuser of the younger child.

Sometimes the behavior!

Getting the medical care these children need, especially when there is a special need challenge. It took me nearly a year to get one of my kiddos who is deaf in one ear, the hearing aid he needed, and the speech therapy he required. Now, I am waiting for authorization for medication and behavioral therapy for another child. I also feel powerless in some of these medical needs, as I cannot authorize, including to change a doctor, or even to order the OTC items offered to each family unit by Sunshine. The set of children I have been here for 8 mos and have not been able to get any of these benefits.

The lack of services in our area. And how we have to travel over an hour for any of the services or support for these kids.

Trying to get boys from saying bad words and telling lies

### **Question 33: Suggestions for increasing the number of quality foster homes in Polk, Hardee, and Highlands Counties?**

That is a hard one, because I think people always hear the negative things regarding foster care, not always the great things and families. Maybe share more positive outcomes.

What about T.V.

Have QUALITY case managers who have maximum of 5-8 cases so they can truly focus on the kids' needs.

I honestly do not know. Stop letting the parents get away with everything. Stop leaving the kids in foster homes for years just to take them away and put them with people they don't know just because they are relatives they just met. There needs to be better communication between all agencies because there is not now. Caseworkers need to stop acting like foster parents are nothing more than just babysitters.

Try getting the word out a little more. We only discovered Heartland while searching.

None.

I don't have a clue.

If the parents are working, there is a need for supports when child is frequently suspended.

Put more resources in Hardee and Highlands.

Support and acknowledge your hard working team.

Honesty. I wasn't warned about a lot of things behaviour wise and that was a huge adjustment I didn't feel prepared for. Not only from the children, but the biological family.

Advertisements.

I don't think a lot of people know much about fostering. It may be good to have an actual family at the info night that can answer questions and talk about their journey.

I wish I knew.

I think you are already working on getting adoptive families to foster it's the best way to weed out who can and can't handle it.

Unfortunately, I cannot help there. More reaching out at churches.

Continue to visit churches and plead the case.

That when children are placed in foster homes out of counties other than where parents are. That the travel for supervised visits be upon the parent not the child. Hard for babies. County to county visits sometimes travel vs. visits 4-5 hours.

Awareness and education to stable, active, families.

In-person conversations with small groups of people.

Start with people who should have a basic understanding of the need and God's call to believers to take care of the vulnerable, orphaned and abandoned.

Get into the places where people do life. Make it personal. Help them see the need.

And be honest. It's hard. But it's worth it. Help and support ARE available.

These kids will be the adults of our communities in no time. They all deserve a chance to break the chains they were born into. Their bio parents deserve the opportunity to break the chains they were born into. Without intervention, that won't happen.

If we are willing to step into the need, we will ultimately benefit too.

I wish I knew. It's a calling for sure. I wish more people were not so afraid of these amazing kids. I wish they would see them as we see them. Maybe do some recruiting amongst people who are in the mental health field? That would probably help too. Like targeted recruiting? I don't know. But thank you all for what you do. We had seen a billboard at the mall I believe for adoptuskids and that's how we started. Maybe a free family movie night at a local theater for a screening of Instant Family. I can say I related to that movie a lot. Or of some other foster care related movies.

Pray! We gotta get more families from churches! :)

they are doing a wonderful job.

Make agencies responsible for careless mistakes in a case

More information.

Work with Case Management to ensure that loving/qualified caregivers don't quit because of them.

I believe that foster parent satisfaction is directly linked to their interaction primarily with their case manager and the support received...at least ours is. So good case managers equal better retention of foster parents. Retention of good case managers is related to caseload and expectations. I believe by limiting the caseload to 20-25 kids, there will be less turnover and burnout rate in case management which will then create less frustration and communication gaps between CM and foster caregivers. □

If HFC could form a partnership with local car dealerships, I think current quality foster homes may be willing to take additional children if they weren't limited by transportation capacity. What if there were a fleet of 15 passenger vans that could be donated to caregivers to use as long as they maintain a certain number of foster beds? □

Increasing stipend based on longevity. This may decrease turnover and retain experienced homes. □

Adhering to 12 months to permanency within the system. There should be strict guidelines regarding how long kids can live in limbo....b/c foster parents live in limbo too. Cases should never drag on for 18+ months. The emotional exhaustion is real.

Pass out flyers. Love for children. Husband has to have the heart for it too. □

Keep recruiting and doing an amazing job.

I wish I knew. I've always known I wanted to foster ever since my parents did and it still took us years to get to an info session. It's hard and nothing can really prepare you.

Be honest and provide as much info as possible.

Address common misconceptions. My friends and family are so surprised when they find out that my foster son can spend the night with someone who hasn't been background checked. People think fostering is impossible

Hire more qualified case managers and hire enough so that their case loads are reduced so that they can give quality care to the children and the foster parents. Case management is the biggest complaint I hear from other foster parents.

Seems like you are doing a great job.

I really don't have any suggestions since the research done into prospective families is pretty extensive .

Always do what they can to assist the caregivers they have, and then the good news will spread.

Perhaps set up booths on weekends at local stores or fairs/ events. Have a street recruiting team. I would be more than happy to help as an ambassador/street team to recruit quality families. □

You could also distribute business card sized advertisement to foster parents so that we may hand them out.

Continue to do what they are doing in supporting foster care families.

I think you do a great job of supporting us.

Get the court and case management to work towards what's actually best for the kids as opposed to reunification at all costs.

Provide current foster caregivers information to interested families. Having current foster parents who live the everyday challenges of fostering could give these families a great insight on fostering.

Let me help advertise at Disney World.

Pursue religious organizations and teachers.

Partnering with churches and other organizations and improving the training process.

Hire more case managers so we as the Foster parents and the children don't feel that they are too busy to consider our time. Take time to actually get to know the Foster families if possible. Take our suggestions, thoughts, ideas, and daily life into actual consideration. Make sure to remind the Guardian ad Litem that late night (9pm) last minute visits because they past there deadline is not acceptable and unrealistic!

Holding small events throughout the community to raise awareness.

An recruitment and training center in each county that provide information for the curious clients. Emergency shelter home so children aren't left in limbo allowing placement staff the opportunity more time to place children in the appropriate home 1-2 weeks).

Higher pay rate and being more understanding that these kids are not easy to take care of it takes a lot of work.

Be more aware of the time and sacrifice homes give. The licensing and relicensing is strenuous.

You guys are doing a great job. Just keep it up.

Communication especially case worker. Some are bad answering calls/texts in general about needed information.

Showing the benefits of working with children that really needs someone to be there.

Do the amusement parks have bulletin boards? Highway billboards.

Low training classes down price?

A fair/field day where kids and foster families can be seen by everyone. No one buys a puppy (it's a sales tactic, bare w/the example) without petting it. Nothing feeds the imagination like seeing what it could be like.

Revamp training classes (initial). More on real-life, less on the anatomy of the brain. The amygdala and its function is irrelevant in almost every part of fostering.

Support. Putting kids first and not #.

I'm not sure. The only other option I could think of would be to contact govt. offices & ask if they can send a speaker to one of their staff meetings to discuss what's provided in foster care.

The payment for children's utilities it's so different to the other counties. And it's a lot of work; maybe that be a factor that there aren't many foster.

I think you are doing almost everything possible already.

Need to provide support to learn how to live with traumatic children. Our foster parents get burnt out easily without the help and then don't want to continue taking anymore kids.

There are a lot of rules that do not make sense to me, most people I talk to get turned off when i talk yo them.

### Question 34: What do you feel are some strengths within the local child welfare system?

The support system is a biggie. The foster parenting group is like one big family.

Caring. Professional. Willing to try new ideas.

We love our GAL & case manager.

I think they do try to help find a child a home for kids. They try to help fix issue that comes up that need to be taken care of and that has helped me out several times.

Communication between relicensing specialist, foster parents and case managers.

Networking - We have a supportive network of foster families and Heartland employees.

Everyone I have met has been great. There are many hard working and engaged employees who have very difficult jobs. They do their best.

They always respond to you when you reach out to them.

Providing basic needs and activities. The parent training is great.

I can call Nicole with anything and she will help me.

There are a lot of people to talk to via phone, just no one is close.

Caring for children and providing them what they need when taken from their home.

That your Licensing Specialist work very hard to make things happen regarding situations with the child and caregiver.

Communication, loyal, friendly, always making me feel appreciated!

Everyone being on the same page and wanting the same thing for the children.

I really feel like HFC truly cares about the families and supports them. Everyone I have met from the organization is genuine and the people are what make the team. I can still call the person that did training for help and have and she will help even though technically her job for us has ended. There are genuine connections made within the system for support.

Our local system is very supportive and easy to communicate with

Lots of great resources!

Y'all definitely listen

Training.

People in Heartland.

I've been very impressed with Heartland and the people they employ. Training for foster parents is very good. There are a lot of checks and balances

The judges who really care. I am so thankful both of our teens were heard and listened to and placed with us. You guys are great at being there for us as foster parents. I know case managers are overworked and underpaid. I know they try their best though and we appreciate that.

Heartland's excellent job.

Magistrates that seem to really be honest in court.

12 months to permanency goals.

ECHO, Lobo, Foster Flock, and Foster FL.

Good GAL staffmembers.

foster family communities that have been built--like TLC and mom support groups.

They are here to help you with whatever is needed for the child/children.

GALs are the best.

Foster parents support one another and several community agencies that assist with tangible needs (lobo ranch, foster florida, echo ministries).

How quickly things are getting done in a timely manner.

The opportunity to go to the next person when the needs are not met.

Same goal.

The level of support, Heartland staff, etc.

Always willing to help.

If I have a problem they help me solve it.

Heartland.

Encouraging coparenting.

Organization, training opportunities, re-licensing specialist,

Positive attitudes, helpful, compassionate

My relicensing counselor! Cynthia is always available for me and I appreciate her so much.

Heartland for Children does an amazing job retaining employees which is very positive and encouraging for foster parents.

The trainings that are made available to foster parents are great.

Knowing that HFC considers me to be an important part of the team is a wonderful feeling. I feel respected by all the staff at HFC.

The GAL office has done a great job recruiting reliable and passionate volunteers.

They seem to be supportive of the bio parents and willing to help as much as possible.

Licensing/Relicensing Specialists are great, and training classes were very good.

Be honest about the children being placed in a persons home.

We have a strong network of peers and HFC is very much willing to listen.

Very helpful and supportive

The support I feel from Jonathan.

That they try there best to help reunify families

Mentor process.

All of the support

The support we receive.

Privatized

Good medical care☐

Great resources☐

Community involvement. Echo

The people who care.

We haven't really had the experience with the local system yet.

U can reach someone if needed, and if the kids are in need of something it's available.

Support from HFC and independent support groups / ministries that focus on foster care.

Our licensing agent is amazing and her and the thought of the kids is what keeps us around. Placement team also rocks. Daily email for things going on is a plus as well!

When there is less staff changes.

That all players are truly dedicated to the children.

The caring.

Very helpful when you need to get information on a child.

Medical care is available easily. Support from heartland is nice when things are needed. The Christmas help is incredible!

Communication.

Getting foster care parents to help each other out.

Overall, our local system comes together as a whole to love on these kiddos. We all stand united.

I always have help and support.

Heartland-Relicensing-Leadership. Board of advisors. Ability to make decisions and appointments w/parents. GAL Attorney.

The passion for the children that each staff members have.

Response to Relicensing Specialists to needs of children in relation to clothing & access to services. Weekly email newsletter informing foster parents of events services available to children is also very helpful.

I think everything! But it's necessary because the security of these kids is necessary.

Good, dedicated staff.

We get a lot of gift support during Christmas which sometimes is to much for these kids.

I think they do a great job whith getting the best care for the children

### **Question 35: Aspects of the foster caregiver experience you would like improvement on within our system of care.**

Childcare: If it is required then it should be funded. We only take older children but that is a big disadvantage on families. Plus get funds to family members just like a foster parent receives.

Better communication with case managers & supervisors when needed. More of a professional attitude with case management.

The length of time children stay in care.

All agencies working together and communicating.

I really can't think of anything. All seems to run well.

None.

Don't automatically disqualify a person off of what someone else said about them. Don't prejudge

How the level of care a child requires is determined.

Support. Proving childcare for foster trainings during week or weekends. Important information in person regarding changes to agency incase we have questions or don't understand instead of emails. Courtesy calls from the top to see how things are progressing.

Allowing us to have 3 therapeutic kiddos.

Try and find resources & persons to localize in all areas. An 1 1/2 hour response is so long sometimes.

How to tackle behavior issues in children besides the TBRI. I feel very alone with this due to his age.

Can't think of any.

The contact with case management agencies can be improved. I feel like every case manager should have a card with all forms of contact and supervisor information. When the first child was dropped off, it was just here she is my name is this and here's my number. Sometimes email is a better track of communication and sometimes a supervisor is needed.



I feel like Heartland is doing an excellent job...keep it up. The improvements, I feel need to be made with some of the agencies. For example- last year I made a dental appt for one of the kids on my day off and notified the case worker that was the earliest available. 2 or 3 days later - I get a phone call from another dentist office with an appointment reminder for 2 days later. When I contacted the case worker, she said her supervisor made the appointment for me....so I said that she needed to take him but she said she was unable as was I because I had to work. Long story, I know but they overstep sometimes when I already had it taken care of....and then all of that just wasted more of my time..and theirs too.

A list of quality providers that work with heartland to expedite services for children. Our kids don't have the same needs as the general population and sometimes there is a bit more urgency to get testing or services in place. Providers that have a good working relationship and understand our special circumstances. Along with a list so that if we need xyz here are some good options. Instead of asking around. We all have the same need of services but if a caseworker or foster parent hasn't dealt with it before I'm sure another caseworker or foster parent would know but we don't have away to contact everyone else in the system.

Timelines; kids shouldn't be in foster care for years. Kids shouldn't have to go in and out of care multiple times. Family should be required to show up within 6 months of the child being placed in care (or else not be able to take them at a later date, away from the family they have been with for such a long period of time).

Clear communications with CM.

Communication - It was extremely frustrating to be constantly confused about what I should do with the children.

More case managers with higher wages so they remain in their positions longer resulting in less transition and turbulence. They are the glue that keeps the cases moving along and I can't imagine how difficult their jobs must be. □

Permanency matters. I totally understand giving the bio parent every opportunity but not when it becomes detrimental to the developing child. Every month in flux makes a difference. They don't get that time back.□

□  
It's very complicated. As a new foster parent, there's so much to learn, understand, and navigate. □

□  
Attachment!!! - more training for fosters parents about attachment - understanding their own attachment style first and then help navigating the attachment style of the new child coming into their home. □

□  
More quality foster homes who don't quit after the first year because they are exhausted, overwhelmed and over-burdened. □

□  
Free quality family/marital counseling in addition to counseling for the foster child. □

□  
Huge dream here, but...federal parental leave (up to 30 days) for a family taking in a new child. Taking that time to get settled, understand the needs of the new child, get all medical, dental, mental, educational assessments done, and adjusting to life with a new human (who might not be new in age).

I am saddened by the stories I've heard from our teens about the group home experiences. I think the vetting for employees needs to be looked into. The stories I have heard are very troublesome. I know teens are rough to work with. I get it. I really do. Maybe some better trauma training and maybe higher pay would get some better options. They need people to really care about them and be there for those mistakes and not just get mad at them for being human. I know funding is tight. I get how that works of course. It's a hard place to be in as supervisors I am sure.

More involvement with CLS □

More therapy/therapists for all kids in care□

Better streamlining of providing info to resources out there--like FDLERS, types of therapies, college scholarship programs, Keys to Independence, etc

With the experience I have been giving, all is well.

Case worker responsiveness.

Case workers need to know what they are doing and actually care about the kids. Not just want to close a case to be done with it.

most of my answers to this are the answers provided within how to increase quality foster homes question.

I think it would be a more selection of training classes

The needs of the child to be better represented in court. Judges to see more than the case plan, but to have a full understanding of the lives of the kids and parents.

Caseworkers, some act like they just don't care, if our children fall down and go to ER, we always take pictures of the injury and send to them or text them we had to go to the ER, Then we are the ones scrutinized when case manager come out and want to know what happened, but you sent pics. We scrutinized by the parents, with a small scratch, but we as Foster parents tell everyone about the behavior of the child after a visit and we are always told yes that can happen, but it takes us the Foster parents 3/4 days to get our children back to some sense of structure, then visit time again.. I wonder at times what's happening in the minds of our children, They see possibly the abuser weekly, then come back to what they believe is there safe place.

Communication! That is the one thing that has been the hardest. It's no one persons fault but there needs to be a system put in place where everyone is on the same page, even if that means emailing while cc'ing the whole team.

Moving cases quicker so kids are not in system so long.

Always, always, always, communication! □

I believe that most of the people in our circuit are doing a great job, but case management needs some work.

As supportive of the bio parents the system is which is good, it can sometimes be a bad thing when reality is the children should not yet be placed with them. I think there should be a bit more extreme measures done to ensure the bio parents are 110% ready to take this on and that the children's feelings be taken into consideration.

Keeping the caregivers in the know, about events going on, and where resources are provided for the children in their care.

My hope is that foster parents can be treated like humans and not like dirt under a shoe. Most of us simply want to help these kiddos.

The support for foster parents as in getting things the kids need. Mental health services.

We need to better communicate what foster parents what is required of them, what their rights are, and what to expect. The training was pretty vague and we had to learn a lot ourselves and from veteran foster parents.

I wish case management would have spent more time with us going over the child's case.

Length of time to establish premancy for children should be more of a priority. Having children in the system for multiple years is heartbreaking and can lead to trauma for these children. Also transitioning children needs to be a priority as well.

Trauma informed schools/ daycare.

Maybe reach out to the new foster caregivers and check in on them when they first start fostering and receive placement. For first time doing this we felt a little out in the dark.

We need qualify therapist and great case managers.

See prior answer regarding extended follow-up with bio parents, post-reunification, regarding school attendance, grades and health of children. Assist parents with NOT parenting out of guilt and learning how to effectively parent with boundaries and discipline (personal and behavioral).

More case managers.

Quicker JRs/Hearings and bioparent follow-up. Some cases are prolonged for simple reasons like example proof of lease. It's requested and yet bioparent given JR for 3 months.

How each child should be handled different every kid is not the same as in behaviors and how to address the behavior.

The relicensing shouldn't be as much paperwork as licensing.

Training offered at night, more weekends. Activities for teenagers on weekends, or in general. Activities not during school days/times.

More training with child care.

Communication. It has been a while since I went to class. It would be a beautiful thing when changes are made that "past grads" are updated.

Keep working together like a team.

More therapy for both us & kids.

CM-Devereux, does not make decisions w/child's best interest, negligent, blames the system.

Being more of a partner relationship.

Caring about the kids - putting them first.

I recommend that for certain services, such as tutoring, that the foster parents are given a budget amount they can work with to select their own tutors. I have had 0 success with.

I think that is fine.

As a foster mother, I should be able to access the medicaid system to get the services we need, and access to the OTC benefit that we are losing each month. The 3 siblings I had placed with me back in August, did not have good screening. They would have been better placed in a therapeutic home, and I could not get the medications they need to help them with their issues, resulting in one of them having to be placed in another home. I have not been offered any further training in therapy based needs. One of the boys has had a referral for Zoloft and behavioral therapy, and I have been waiting for any movement on that for 3 weeks now. His little brother had to be moved from my home due to his inability to control the chaos in his head, and was hurting the other children in my home, and I was powerless to do anything about it, despite waiting 2 months for medication approval. He had to be placed elsewhere, and it broke all of our hearts, but, it was very harmful to the other children I had already in care.

Services more available closer to our area.

Less rules or better ones.

### Question 36: Comments or Suggestions

Grandparents, etc. are still fostering a child and could use the extra funds to help the children.□  
Childcare: That is a big topic that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Thomas with HEADS is awesome and really cares and is very supportive.

We are very thankful for the opportunity that Heartland has given us.

Overall I think it's great to have an agency who help children and families when they fall on tough times. Excellent corporations.

Y'all are great! Thanks for all you do!!

You all are wonderful! Thank you for the support, it makes what I do so much better!

I sincerely feel that fostering is too difficult for homes where both caregivers are working full time. We were overwhelmed.

Continued training links should be posted on the Heartland for Children web site.

Overall, we are thankful to have you guys be there for us. We know you all work so hard and appreciate what you guys do. It takes a village and while you may not be in our home day to day, you are definitely a part of our village and we appreciate that! Thank you!

Be more involved with the agencies to catch all the mistakes that they make.

None at this time!! I have a GREAT Case Manager□ Wyshana Thompson and relicensing Ms. Audrey!!□  
The support makes it worth while in knowing you and a supporting team are making a difference

Thank you.

Thank you Donna for all you do and have done. She was the first person from HFC that made me feel welcomed. In the beginning, at times, I wasn't sure if you all wanted me as a foster parent, although I felt a need to continue foster here in Florida. Initially licensing was a little rough on this end. But once I became licensed it changed, and I can remember Donna telling me thank you and she was so warm when she made her initial visit. She has been a true asset to me during this journey. Thanks again.

I just want to take a moment to commend Gwen on being a rockstar. She is amazing and I wish the whole team could be like her. Thank you, Gwen!

Audrey is the best

Thanks for all you do.

Our children are special so let's keep going working, never give up!

I've never been part of something so fulfilling and loving!

It's difficult to foster, fight and always put the child first - to the point of exhaustion - when CM, GAL don't do the same. Efforts seem useless - especially when negligence prevails and a child is placed back into harms way.

Overall, the services & support I receive from Heartland are superb.

This experience has been unique and we are very happy to be foster and give them our love and make these children part of our family. Thanks Heartland!

I pretty much summed it up. We all know, we need more foster homes, and we all know until others hear the call, we will always be in this position.