

Foster Care and Adoption Association of Nevada

August 12, 2004

Caregivers, caseworkers, community Advocating for Resources and Education

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Meeting Date <i>8-12-04</i>	

Foster Care and Adoption Association of Nevada, Inc. would make the following recommendations.

- 1) The Nevada Legislature increase funding for foster parent respite care to allow all foster parents 14 days of respite each fiscal year at a rate of \$30 a day for ages 0 – 12 and \$35 a day for ages 13 to 18. It is also recommended that some of these funds be allowed for hourly respite in lieu of requiring an overnight respite placement.**
- 2) The state of Nevada develop a statewide Foster Care Provider Advocate program to assist foster parents with problems and concerns while working within the foster care system.**
- 3) The Nevada DCFS policy and subsequently Nevada NRS to be amended to require an increase of the minimum annual ongoing training hours for family foster care providers to twelve (12) hours by FY08.**
- 4) The Nevada Legislature direct DCFS to reinstate the Legislative approved grant to the state foster parent association to enable FCAAN to continue to provide support to the foster parents in Nevada.**
- 5) The Nevada Legislature insure that all family foster care reimbursement rates be equitable throughout the state, and be based on the USDA Middle-Income Urban West Guidelines for raising a child when fixing and approving monthly board and care reimbursement rates for foster care.**

JUSTIFICATIONS

Recommendation 1

The Nevada Legislature increase funding for foster parent respite care to allow all foster parents 14 days of respite each fiscal year at a rate of \$30 a day for ages 0 – 12 and \$35 a day for ages 13 to 18. It is also recommended that some of these funds be allowed to be used for hourly respite in lieu of requiring an overnight respite placement.

During the 2001 Legislative session, the foster care rate was increased to an average of \$20 day for foster children, while the respite care rate remained the same as it has been since it's inception. The current respite care rate is \$15 a day for children 0 to 13 years, and \$20 a day for children 13 years and older. FCAAN recommends that the rate be increased to reflect the reimbursement rate increase from the 2001 Legislative session.

The FCAAN Board of Directors also recommends that respite funds be given the flexibility to be available to foster parents on an hourly basis as well as overnight respite placement in order to afford the foster parents the same flexibility.

Recommendation 2

The state of Nevada develop a statewide Foster Care Provider Advocate program to assist foster parents with problems and concerns while working within the foster care system.

Currently in most regions of the state of Nevada, there is no person or office designated to assist foster care providers in navigating the sometimes-complicated foster care system. Foster Care Providers have no one to help settle grievances, complaints, or concerns. Many foster care providers have been subjected to illegal or unethical retribution for some unknown infraction in the form of unscheduled and unnecessary removal of foster children from their home, or refusal to place any new children in their home.

It is the consensus of the FCAAN Board of Directors that the best support to foster parents come from former or present foster parents, someone who has lived the foster parent lifestyle and understands the intricacies and complications that naturally occur with that lifestyle.

FCAAN has a written draft for a buddy and liaison program and is in the process of refining the program. The main barrier to this program is that on the most part, the program depends on volunteerism of present and former foster care providers. FCAAN would like to be able to include a per diem to the volunteers as well as some paid positions in order to assure quality and consistency.

The FCAAN Board of Directors also feels that if foster parents have a safe, comfortable, non-threatening place to bring their problems, concerns, and grievances to that will help advocate for acceptable resolutions, that the foster care system will benefit by retaining good and stable foster parents, and will increase cooperation and respect between the foster care agencies and foster parents and will also result in achieving our ultimate goal of the stable placement of the state's foster children. Therefore, it is imperative that an advocate program be completely autonomous from the foster child-placing agency.

Recommendation 3

The Nevada DCFS policy and subsequently Nevada NRS to be amended to require an increase of the minimum annual ongoing training hours for family foster care providers to twelve (12) hours by FY06.

It is the consensus of the FCAAN Board of Directors that 4 hours of ongoing training is inadequate to assure that the state of Nevada have good, qualified, and well prepared foster parents. The children entering foster care today have greater needs and more difficult problems than ever before. Through FCAAN's involvement with the National Foster Parent Association (NFPA), it has come to our attention that Nevada is on the lower end of the spectrum in its training requirements. It is our feeling that the training requirements should be raised to a minimum of 12 hours annually.

This change may come with some difficulty and resistance, therefore FCAAN recommends that the requirement be raised by two (2) hours each year or four (4) hours each biennium until reaching the 12 hour minimum in FY06.

The fiscal impact to the State should be minimal since the state already provides training opportunities to foster parents. Besides having better informed and prepared foster parents another result of requiring additional training hours would be greater participation by foster parents in the already existing and funded ongoing foster parent training provided by DCFS and state local foster parent organizations.

Recommendation 4

The Nevada Legislature direct DCFS to reinstate the Legislative approved grant to the only state-wide foster parent association to enable FCAAN to continue to provide support to the foster parents in Nevada.

From 1999 until 2003 the DCFS budget account 3229-15 had included funds totaling \$55,000 to be allocated to the state-wide foster care association to provide an annual

training conference and support services to foster parents. In the process of making changes to the budget to prepare for the Clark County integration, the allocation was put in the Recruitment and Retention budget for Clark County because the last check issued to FCAAN, the only state-wide foster care association, was sent to a Clark County address.

This turn of events has created many problems to FCAAN and subsequently to the foster care providers throughout Nevada. FCAAN had several events and projects slated for FY03-04 that unfortunately had to be canceled because of this unfortunate turn of events.

Recommendation 5

The Nevada Legislature insure that all family foster care reimbursement rates be equitable throughout the state, and be based on the USDA Middle-Income Urban West Guidelines for raising a child when fixing and approving monthly board and care reimbursement rates for foster care.