

Foster parents of high-need children need more support

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As the U.S. foster care system moves away from relying on residential programs for children with complex emotional and behavioral needs according to the 2018 Family First Prevention Services Act, more of

these high-need children will be placed in home-based therapeutic foster care (TFC) settings. But, according to a study led by CUNY SPH doctoral students Erika Tullberg and Wendy Vaughn, many TFC foster parents do not receive the training and support they need in order to provide these children with stable, supportive, and therapeutic care. This results in high levels of placement disruptions, which are associated with both emotional and behavioral problems among children.

As part of a project focused on implementing trauma-informed practices in TFC settings, the researchers led focus groups with TFC foster parents that explored different aspects of their experiences, identified multiple ways in which they need support, and provided recommendations for foster care agencies looking to retain skilled foster parents and increase the quality and stability of [children's](#) experience in TFC programs.

Among other things, participants said that strong communication and cooperation with foster agency staff, transparency on behalf of the agency regarding the specific needs and history of children before placement, and strategies for managing caseworker transitions for both children and foster parents would help them to provide the best care possible to children and minimize disruptions.

"The more TFC programs can anticipate and proactively collaborate with TFC [foster parents](#) to address these concerns, the more likely these [vulnerable children](#) will receive the consistent and skilled caretaking associated with positive emotional, behavioral and child welfare outcomes," said Tullberg.

More information: Erika Tullberg et al. Unpacking "support": Understanding the complex needs of therapeutic foster parents, *Children and Youth Services Review* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.chilyouth.2019.104420](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2019.104420)

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