

Foster Family Foundation of Georgia

Foster Parent and Foster
Care Provider Survey
Results

Prepared by the Carl Vinson Institute
of Government – University of
Georgia

The Surveys – Foster Parents

- Simple Random Selection from complete list of foster parents both from DHR and Private Providers
- 400 foster parents completed telephone surveys
- Interviews averaged 24 minutes and were conducted in April 2006

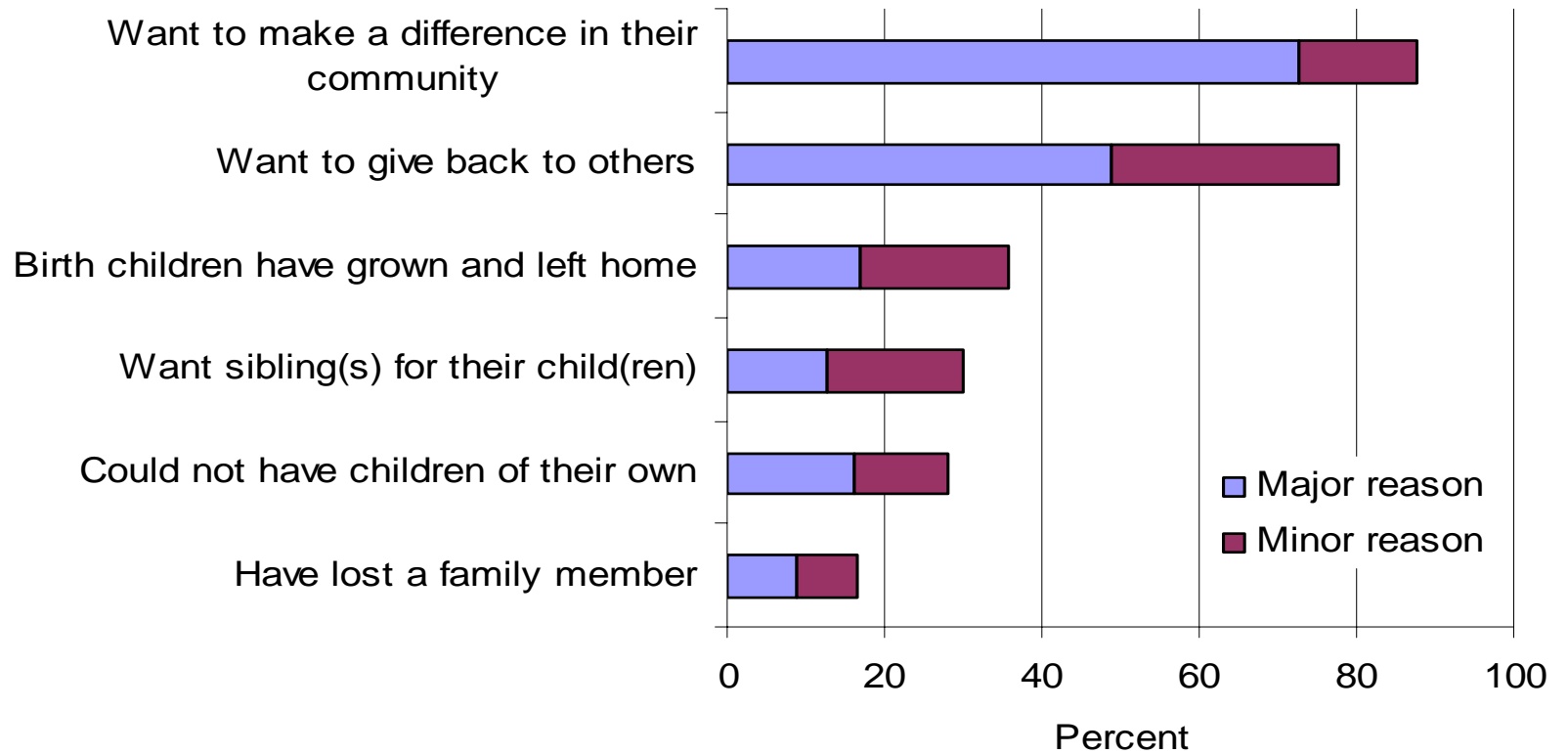
The Surveys - Providers

- On-line survey designed for providers of in-home foster care services
- Letters sent out with survey URL in March 2006 to 199 foster care providers – both public and private
- 99 providers responded to survey by deadline
- 11 additional respondents, not included in analysis

Foster Parents – Who Are They?

- 76% of Respondents Female
- Avg. years of service 7.5
- 63% married and 4% have partners
- 48% of two parent homes – both parents work outside the home
- 47% report income of less than \$40k with 35% reporting less than \$30k
- 42% African-American, 54% White, 4% Hispanic

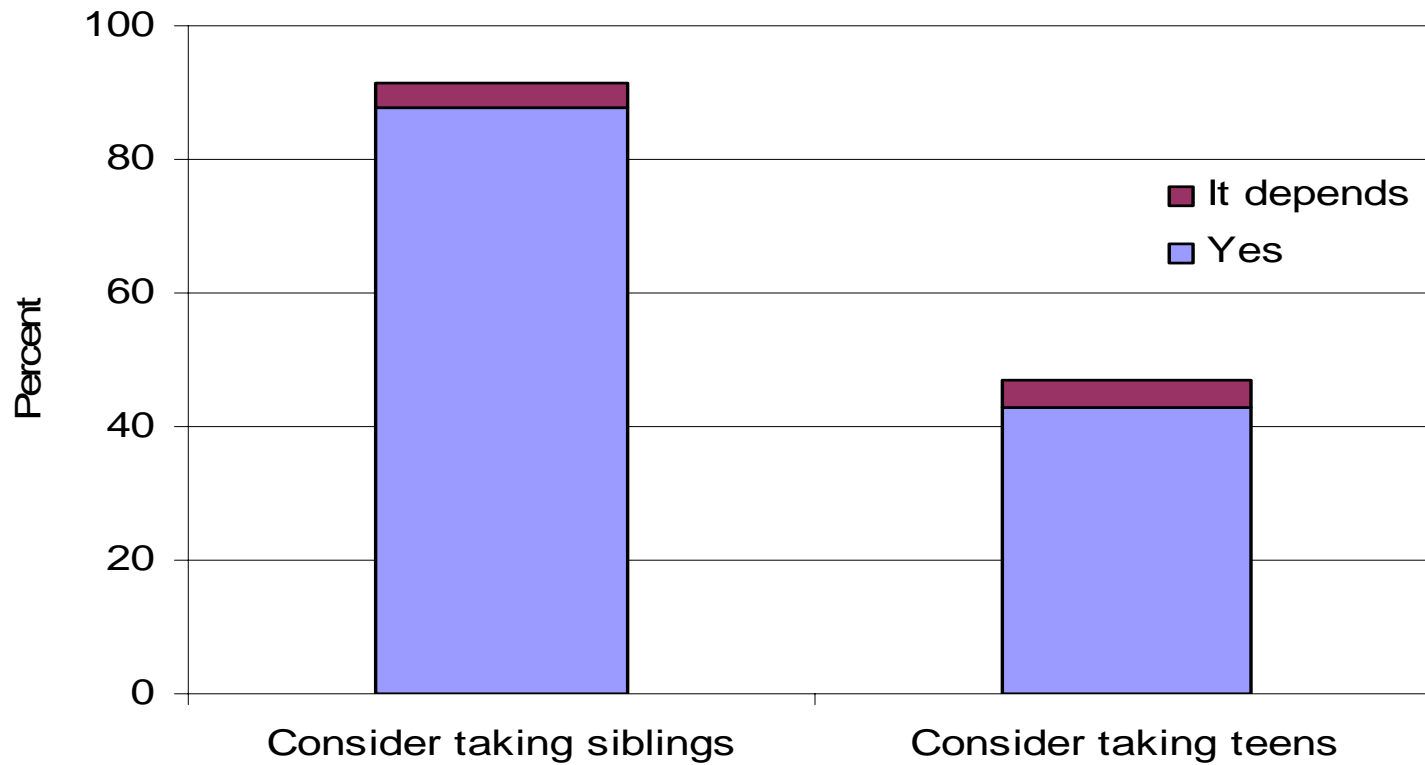
The Decision To Foster



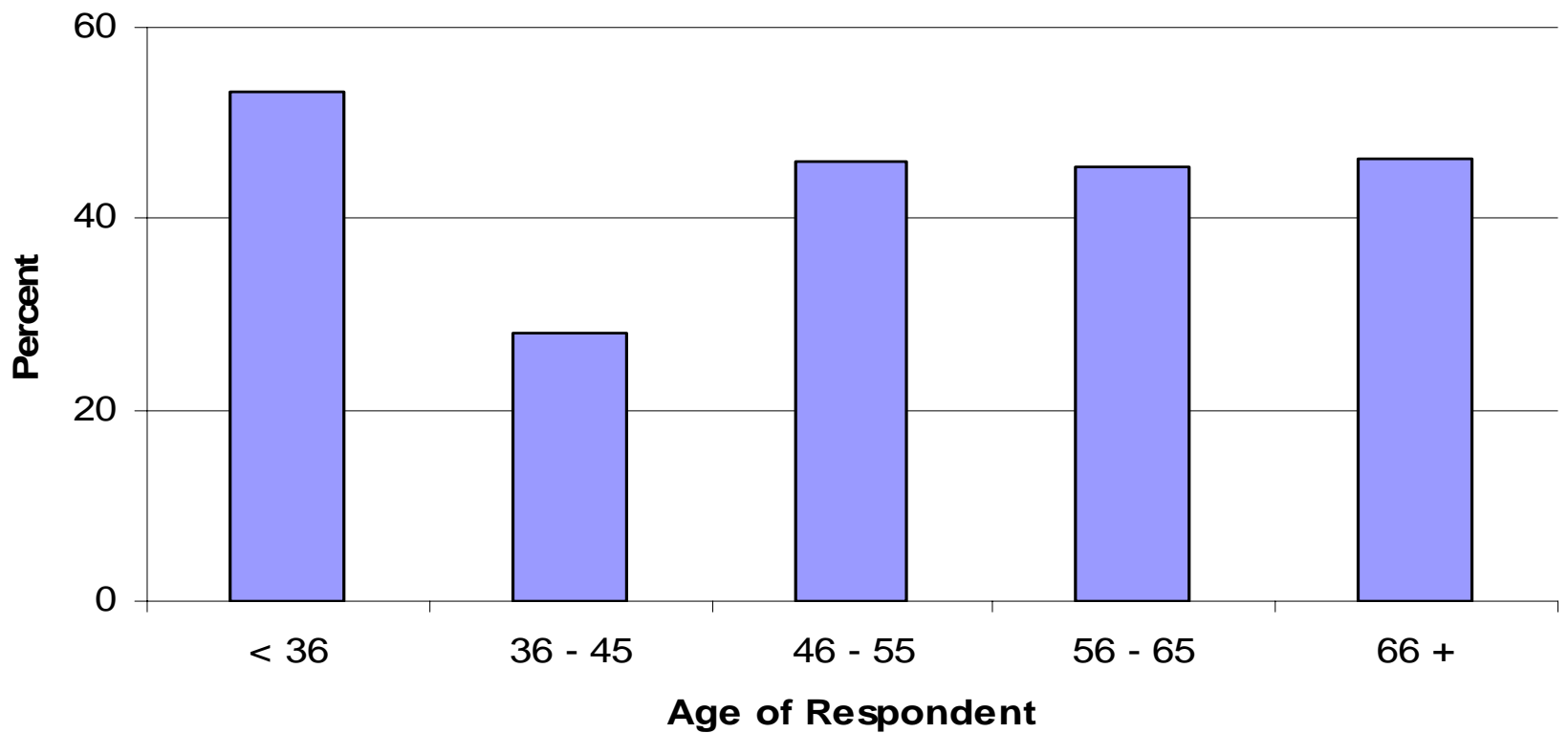
Also of note

- 38% indicate they have adopted one of their foster children (52% fostered with this intent)
- 53% will foster as long as they are able
- 9% cited religion, faith, or calling as reason for fostering
- 85% would recommend fostering to family and friends

Willingness to Foster Siblings or Teenagers . . .



Willingness to Take Teenagers – Age of Foster Parent



Teenagers Continued . . .

- Some indicated bad experiences with biological teenagers
- Many cited concerns with influence teenagers may have on their younger children
- Others report wanting their biological children to remain the oldest in the home

The Fostering Experience - Training

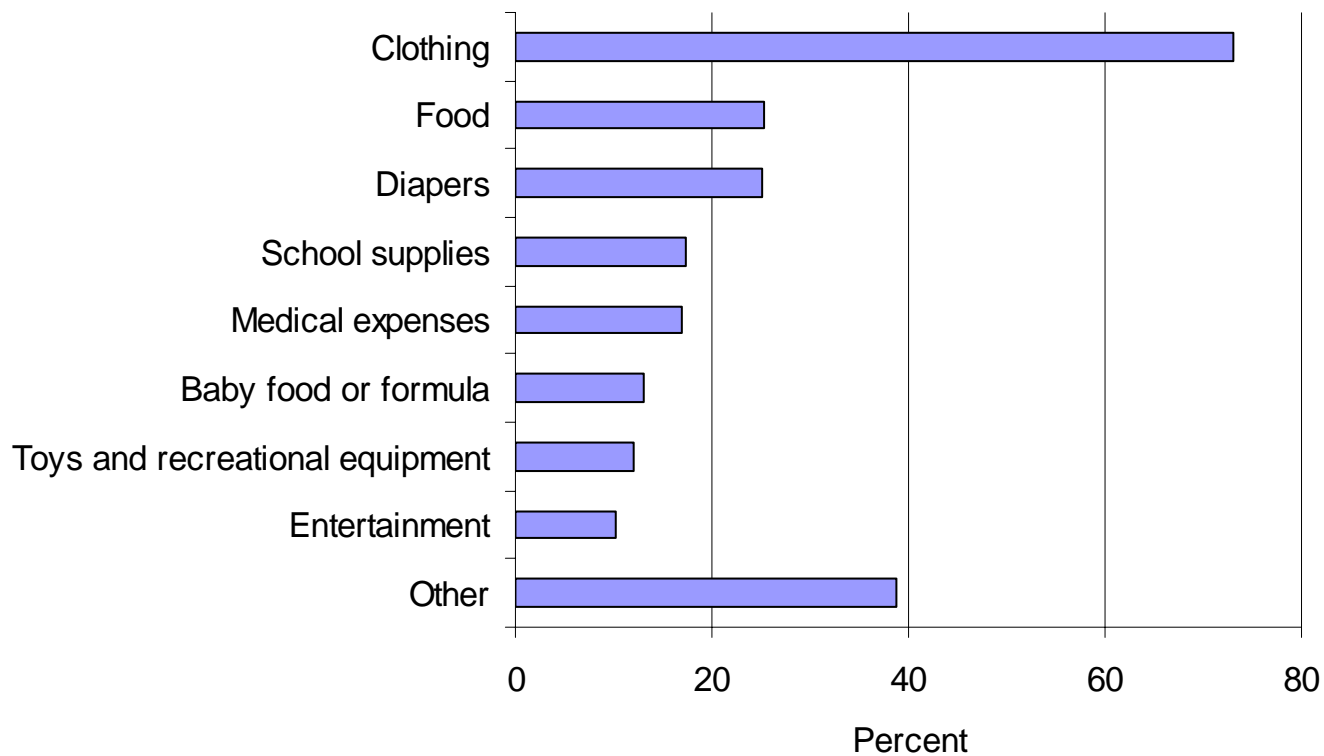
- 83% MAPP, 17% IMPACT, 5% Treatment Resource Training
- 54% very prepared to foster, 37% somewhat prepared
- MAPP trained foster parents slightly higher in reported preparedness
- 87% report training convenient to attend
- 33% report that childcare was provided

Reported Delays in Fostering System

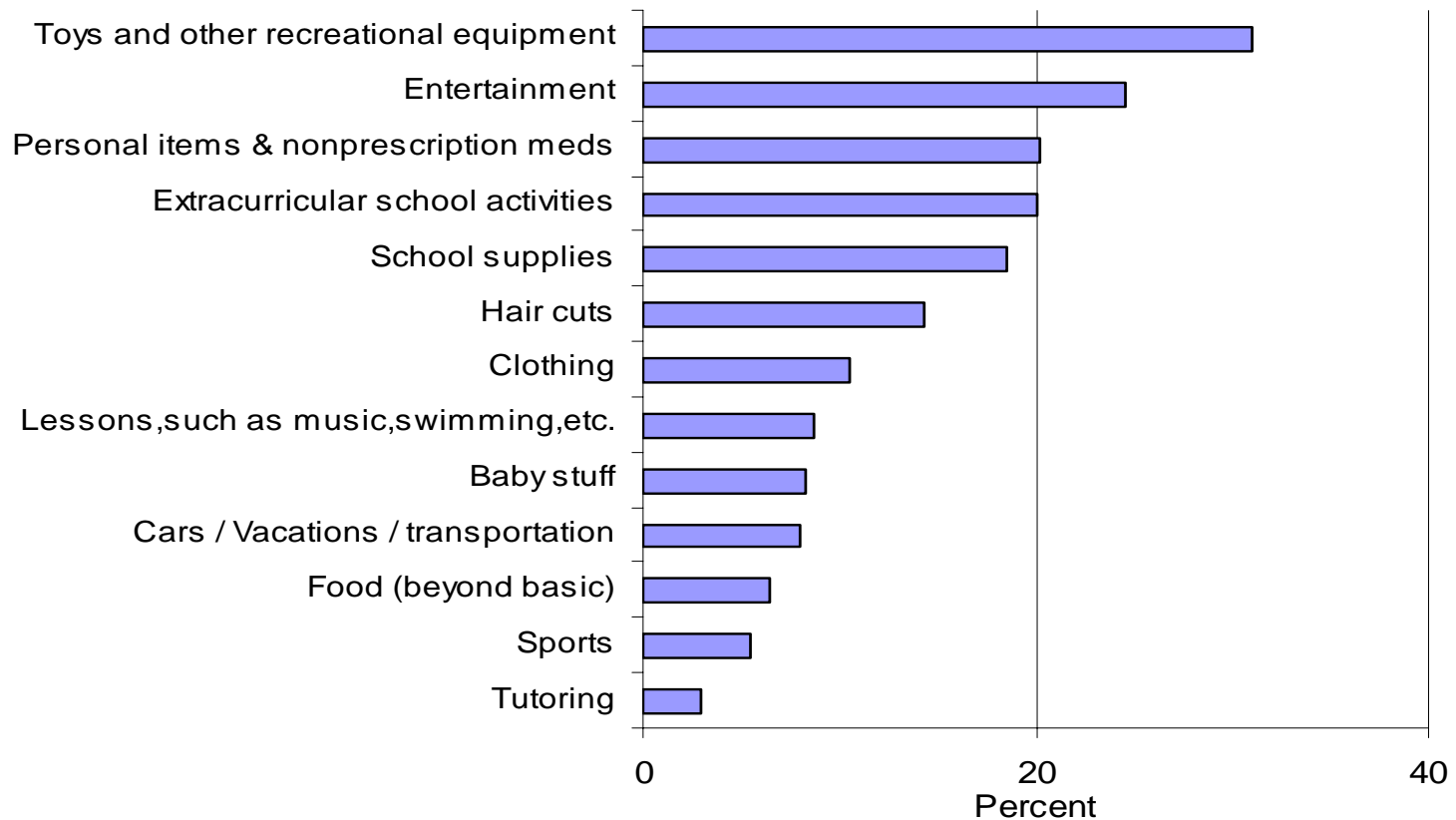
- Some foster parents indicated a delay between expressing interest and follow-up from providers
- Median wait time between being approved and getting first child placed was 4.4 weeks
- 33% indicate paperwork as cause for delay
- 11% report personal circumstances caused delay

The Fostering Experience - Expenses

Items in which Foster Parents Pay Expenses Up-Front



Costs Incurred that are Not Reimbursed



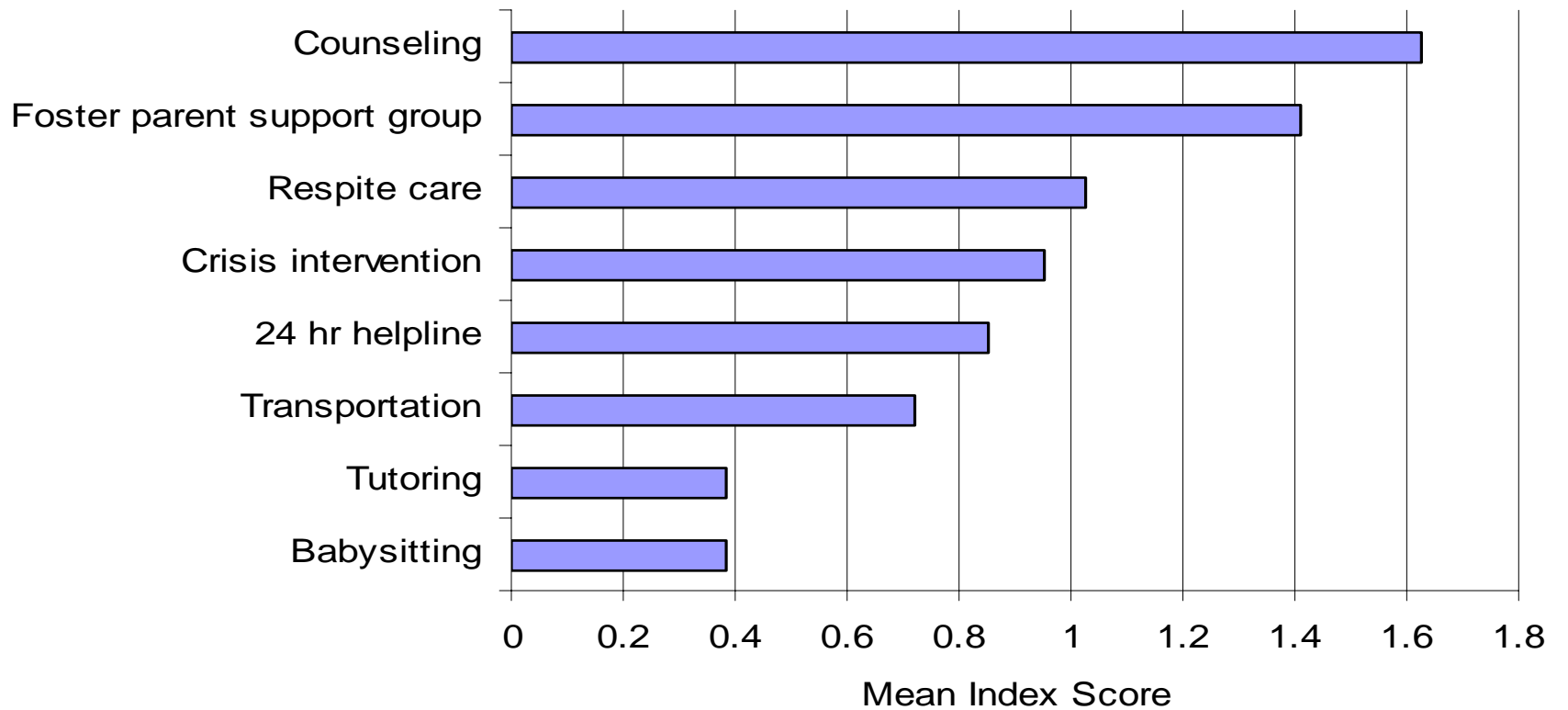
Information Transfers

- 71% report not enough information regarding children at placement or none at all
- 48% indicate involvement in planning transitions for their foster children
- 90% of DFACS families and 73% of private provider families received the DFACS Foster Parent Manual
- 86% have the Foster Parent Bill of Rights

Needs and Access

- Support Groups and Counseling reported as the most important service
- Transportation reported as least important
- Majority report having access to needed services
- Private Provider homes reported higher levels of access to services

Average Scores for Importance – Accessibility Index



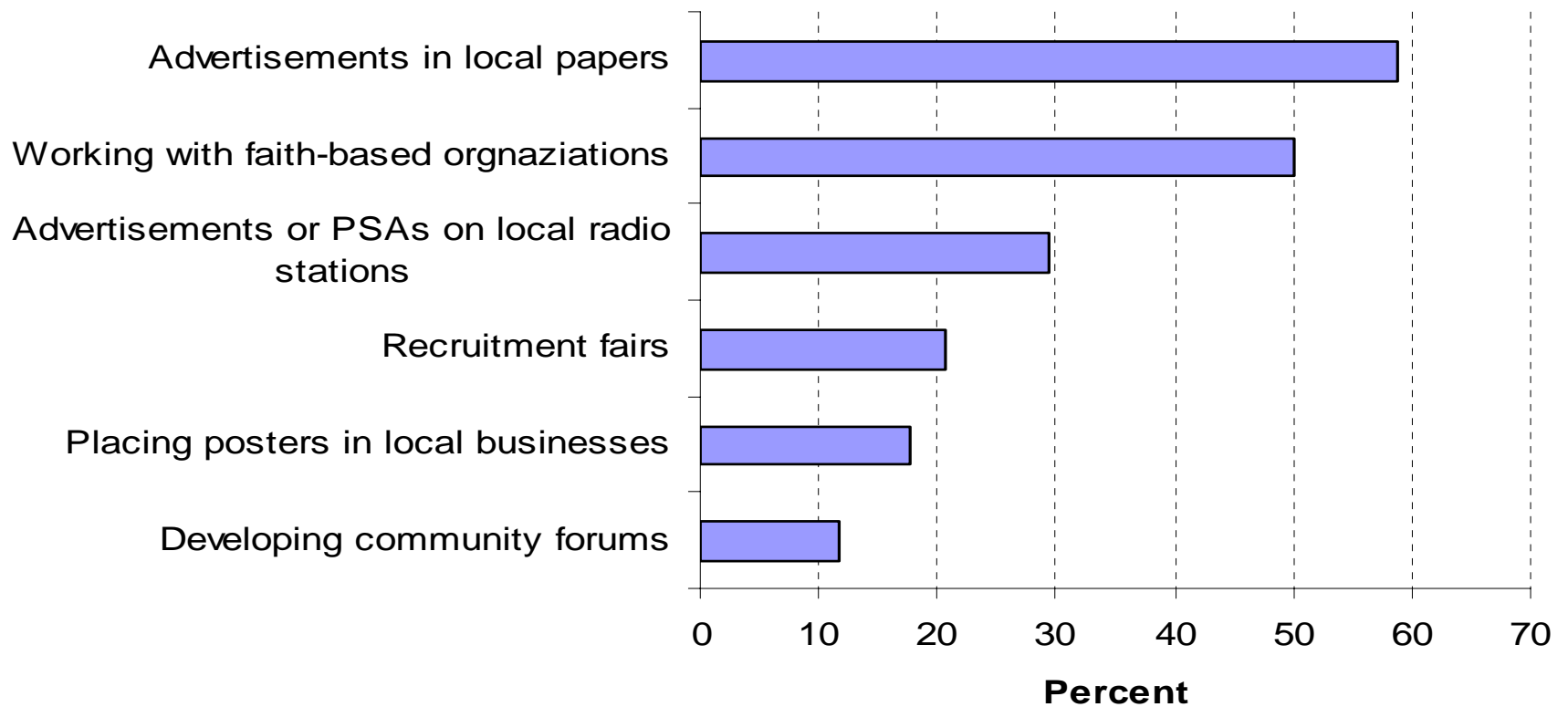
Foster Care Service Providers

- Note – report reflects self reported views and estimates
- Data subject to error of memory, accessibility and non-response
- Of the 99 respondents, 18 were private providers
- Median number of children in state providers significantly higher than median for private providers

Success in Recruiting Foster Parents

- 43% of those recruited are approved
- 27% opt out voluntarily
- More info needed to ascertain why the other 30% do not make it through the process

Effective Recruitment Strategies



Targeted Recruitment

- 27% of providers target recruitment for families that will take siblings
- 23% of providers target recruitment for families that will take teenagers

Training and Services

- The State has now moved from MAPP to IMPACT
- 86% of Providers require IMPACT
- 57% of Providers do not provide childcare during training
- 71% offer training quarterly, 7% once per month
- Private providers offer more services directly than state providers

Other Suggestions by Providers

- Foster parents are the best and most underutilized recruitment resource
- Child care provision during training sessions needed
- Need for increased support through more staff contact – increase staff

Suggested Themes for Consideration

Although the surveys provide a snapshot, several common themes and suggestions surfaced that the Foster Family Foundation may want to consider . . .

Recruitment

- Given that African-Americans may be more likely to serve as foster parents than any other racial or ethnic group a recruitment strategy targeting this population may prove effective

Recruitment through Faith-Based Organizations

Connecting faith-based values to the foster parents' need to make a difference, give back to their communities, and answer a “calling” will continue yielding success.

Recruitment By Foster Parents

- Formalizing foster parent involvement in recruitment could yield high returns given 85% of Foster Parents would recommend fostering to family and friends and a significant number of foster parents said they foster because their parents or some member of their family or friend did.

Targeted Recruitment of Teens

- Foster parents under the age of 36 more likely to accept teenagers
- Developing strategies to target this age group may yield more placements for teens

Lag Times May Cause Loss of Potential Foster Families

- Delays reported in time between expressing interest and receiving follow-up from providers.
- Also 4.4 week wait for first placement
- May be cause of losing 30% of those who begin the process
- Additional resources for follow-up may need to be explored as a means of eliminating and or shortening delays and decrease potential foster parent recruitment losses

Training Curriculum

- Majority of respondents thought MAPP prepared them for fostering
- Due to its newness, fewer respondents trained with IMPACT
- An on-going evaluation of IMPACT should be done in order to ensure that the best curriculum is in place

Training Services

- Majority foster parents felt there was adequate amount of training available to them
- Both foster parents and providers indicate a need for childcare services during training sessions

Expense of Foster Parenting

- 35% of Foster Parents report income less than \$30,000; therefore
- Limiting the up-front expenditures and shortening time for reimbursements;
- Identifying other fund sources to support expenditures not reimbursed by state; and
- Evaluating adequacy of current per diem
- Could reduce financial burden of fostering and lead to greater satisfaction and longer service

Partnering in Parenting

- Foster parents expressed a need to feel like a true partner with the agency needing
- More timely transfer of information upon placement;
- Inclusion in case reviews and transition planning with all personnel; along with
- Creative forms of acknowledgement and appreciation;
- May yield greater sense of partnership and thereby greater satisfaction and longer years of service.

Conclusion

- There are compassionate and dedicated people fostering and providing services to foster families in Georgia
- There are many assets in current system on which the Foster Family Foundation can build
- Additional approaches, strategically focused will improve the recruitment, training and retention of foster parents
- Implementation of on-going evaluation will support continuous system improvement