

*COFCCA SPOTLIGHT ON...***KEEP: Keeping Foster Parents Trained and Supported****From the Desk of Jim Purcell...**

I was reading an article recently that mentioned a program named KEEP. Few details about the program were provided; even the meaning of the term KEEP was unclear. What was clear was that it was a child welfare program with a track record of producing positive results. This peaked my interest so we did some additional exploring. Here is what I learned.

KEEP is an abbreviation for Keeping Foster Parents Trained and Supported. It provides training, supervision and support for both kin and foster parents. Patty Chamberlain and the folks at the Oregon Social Learning Center developed it. They are perhaps better known as the developers of [Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care \(MTFC\)](#)<sup>i</sup>. KEEP uses training that is similar but less intensive than the training used in MTFC and like its old sibling, a number of studies provide solid evidence to support its effectiveness.<sup>ii</sup>

KEEP offers a structured approach to training, supervision and support for kin and foster parents who provide care to children between the ages of 5 and 12. Training is provided in a group setting of between 7 – 12 parents, offered once per week over a sixteen-week period. The training helps

foster parents see themselves as agents for change who have the opportunity to change the trajectory of a young person's life. The training provides parents with tools and techniques for dealing with the behavioral and emotional challenges that children and youth sometimes present. Parents are also actively supported in applying and practicing the techniques learned.

It seems intuitive that if you provide training and support to kin and foster parents, they will be better able to function in their roles so the measured impacts of KEEP come as no surprise. Kin and foster parents who participated in the program demonstrate enhanced parenting skills. Children in their care, especially those who displayed higher rates of behavior problems, demonstrate some positive change in behavior. Children also experience greater stability in foster care and are more likely to achieve a positive discharge.<sup>iii iv</sup> These findings were supported by a National Institutes of Health (NIH) manuscript "*Effects of a Foster Parent Training Intervention on Placement Changes of Children in Foster Care*"<sup>vi</sup> that concludes "Providing evidence-based training in parent management techniques for all foster and kin parents could prove be a cost-effective strategy for managing child behavior problems, reducing placement disruptions, and helping to

maintain safe and stable placements for children in the care of child welfare agencies.”

KEEP has been awarded a scientific rating of 3 out of possible 5 by the California Evidence Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC)<sup>vii</sup>. Meeting this standard means that the CEBC has determined that there is “Promising Research Evidence” to support the effectiveness of the program.

Getting the program started requires an investment of approximately \$ 40,000<sup>viii</sup> and while the cost is significant, based upon the evidence, KEEP is clearly onto something. That the data confirms something that we already suspected is beside the point. KEEP has provided evidence that supports greater investment in training and support of kin and foster parents. This makes KEEP worth a closer look.<sup>ix</sup>

Note: The NYC Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) included information about KEEP in a recently held forum on evidence-based practices.

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.mtfc.com/>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.preventionaction.org/what-works/keep-proves-its-worth-keeping-across-us>

<sup>iii</sup> **Chamberlain, P., Price, J., Leve, L. D., Laurent, H., Landsverk, J. A., & Reid, J. B. (2008).** Prevention of behavior problems for children in foster care: Outcomes and mediation effects. *Prevention Science*, 9, 17-27.

<sup>iv</sup> **Price, J. M., Chamberlain, P., Landsverk, J., Reid, J., Leve, L., & Heidemarie, L. (2008).** Effects of a foster parent training intervention on placement changes of children in foster care. *Child Maltreatment*, 13,64-75.

<sup>v</sup> **Chamberlain, P., Price, J., Reid, J. B., & Landsverk, J. (2008).** Cascading implementation of a foster and kinship parent intervention. *Child Welfare*, 87(5), 27-48.

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2441918/>

<sup>vii</sup> <http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/keeping-foster-and-kin-parents-supported-and-trained/>

<sup>viii</sup> *We contacted OSLC and requested information regarding costs of contracting. We learned that KEEP does have an implementation arm within their organization and that they offer a couple different implementation packages. The basic package is approximately \$40,000 and pretty complete. It includes organizational preparation and readiness, five day training for the facilitator and co-facilitator, weekly consultation throughout the implementation of three different sets of trainees through the entire 16 week program for each of the three sets of trainees. The OSLC consultant is on site for each training and the facilitator and co-facilitator take turns practicing the presentation of different sections of the training. In addition it includes a fidelity review/certification of that individual team following the completion of the three 16 week groups.*

*For more information on implementation contact Peter Sprengelmeyer ([peters@oslccp.org](mailto:peters@oslccp.org)) and Courtenay Padgett ([court@cr2p.org](mailto:court@cr2p.org)) of OSLC. Peter is the executive director of OSLC Community Programs (OCP)-- the organization that implements KEEP, and Courtenay oversees the operations of KEEP implementations. They can also be reached by phone at (541) 743-4340*

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