



### **Focus Groups – General Information**

**Community:** Adoptive and Foster Families (Old Town, ME)

**Date:** January 12, 2015

**Moderator:** Rachel George

**Commissioner:** Gail Werrbach

**Topic:** Experiences as Foster and Adoptive Parents

### **Participants**

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Debora McLaughlin (DM) | 5. Reba Parsons (RP)      |
| 2. Barbara Kates (BK)     | 6. Stephanie Spencer (SS) |
| 3. Lynn Nye (LN)          | 7. Bette Hoxie (BH)       |
| 4. Richard Nye (RY)       | 8. Holly Shafer (HS)      |

### **Recording**

**MS. GEORGE (RG):** Okay, it is January 12, 2015. We're here in Old Town, Maine. The file number is FG-ME-201501-0014. My name is Rachel George and I'm here today with, would you mind stating your name:

**MS. SHAFER (HS):** Holly Shafer.

**MR. NYE (RN):** Richard Nye.

**MS. NYE (LN):** Lynn Nye.

**MS. KATES (BK):** Barbara Kates.

**MS. SPENCER (SS):** *(laughter)* Stephanie Spencer.

**MS. HOXIE (BH):** Bette Hoxie.

**MS. MCLAUGHLIN (DM):** Debbie McLaughlin.

**MS. PARSONS (RB):** Reba Parsons.

**MS. WERRBACH (GW):** Gail Werrbach.

**RG:** Excellent. And Holly, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

**HS:** Yes.

**RG:** Richard, have you been informed, understood and--?

**RN:** Yes.

**RG:** Lynn, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

**LN:** Yes.

**RG:** Barbara, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

**BK:** Yes.

**RG:** Stephanie, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

**SS:** Yes.

**RG:** Bette, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

**BH:** Yes.

**RG:** Deborah, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

**DM:** Yes.

**RG:** And Reba, have you been informed, understood and signed a consent form?

**RP:** Yes.

**RG:** Excellent. So, I have to let each of you know that if at any point during this recording you indicate that there's a child or an elder currently in need of protection or that there's imminent risk of serious bodily harm or death to an identifiable person or group including yourself, that that information may not be protected as confidential. Does everyone understand?

**COLLECTIVE:** Yes.

**RG:** Excellent. So I just wanted to start off first by asking each of you if you ever had any native children in your home as a foster or adoptive parent?

**LN:** We had one for a summer.



**RG:** And I guess going back to the entire group, can you tell me about a time where you felt very positive about your experience or an instance where you felt very positive about your time as a foster or adoptive parent?

**BK:** Is that specifically for native children or for any children?

**RG:** Thinking specifically about native children as well as non-native children. I guess if you guys are referencing a native child in particular, I would ask you to say so.

**LN:** Yeah, there was some question the mother wouldn't, just said she didn't who the father was and that depended whether the... be a tribal member, but she ended up, and he had all the facial features that are common and she decided when the adoption agency was going to turn him over to DHS she suddenly decided who the father was also native so that he would qualify for membership and he disappeared overnight.

**RG:** Wow.

**LN:** Yep, and they called me, they called us the late afternoon before and apparently the social welfare person had wanted them to come take the baby because they couldn't get there until morning and the Good Samaritan agency refused to do that and when we dropped the baby off at their office the next morning after a whole summer. We'd just gotten our hopes up that we get to keep him because they couldn't settle the legal stuff for formal adoption.

**GW:** So mom was not native?

**LN:** Yes she was, but she wasn't enough--

**GW:** She wasn't on census.

**LN:** She was, but she wasn't enough so her child would automatically be, there had to be some contributed by the father, but he did have the pronounced upper lip and coloring and definitely a different temperament than any other baby we've had in our home. We've had a lot of them.

**RG:** Do you mind telling me a little bit about what, how that experience was for you? I can imagine it was very heartbreaking.

**LN:** You get used to it in foster care. *(small chuckle)* You really do. It was, he was the first baby that I really had hope of keeping. The one we, our youngest one now we took out of NICU, but he was two before I started to believe that we might be able to keep him, but we've been assured that he would be taken over by DHS, which means he would get to stay so we got our hopes up a whole more than we had for any other baby that's been in our home.

**GW:** What time period was this?

**RN:** 2010, it was around, we got him in June of 2010 and then I think it was --

**LN:** August 28<sup>th</sup>.

**RN:** August 28<sup>th</sup>, yeah.

**LN:** He went, the whole, the hostility, like we were going to be less professional parents or something and you obviously had to take the child, someone had to take the child the night before to hold him until they could get to Bangor the next day.

**GW:** So the baby had been with you for about four months.

**LN:** Uh huh.

**GW:** And that was through the State Child Welfare.

**LN:** Actually it was through Good Samaritan Agency. Mom wanted to put him up for adoption, but she wouldn't help finalize the legal stuff so that they could.

**GW:** Okay, so while they were going through that legal, you were --

**LN:** We, yes we fostered for them.

**GW:** You were then the foster parents.

**LN:** And then they couldn't afford to keep on doing it because it's a nonprofit and mom wasn't cooperating, so they were just going to turn the child over to DHS custody and mom suddenly decided she knew who the father was and got the, I'm not sure of the proper term anymore, Bureau of Indian Affairs or whatever the social service branch is from, I'm pretty sure it was Pleasant Point that they just couldn't get down in time that day and came the next.

It's really insulting to... we've had lots of short term, short notice, I've been called at 9:30 at night when everybody's asleep told I have to have the kid packed up by 9 o'clock in the morning. So it's just the fact that they were, seemed to have such an aggressive stance about the whole thing.

**GW:** So you, so who let you know that the baby was going to be moving?

**LN:** The--

**GW:** I don't mean who the person.

**LN:** Right, the Good Samaritan Agency called me to tell me that they had been speaking, yeah that they had been contacted and they were pretty offended at the stance, how they were being



treated. It just seemed like it was an additional negative piece that really didn't need to happen.

**GW:** Because the tribe wanted to come down immediately to pick up the baby?

**LN:** Yeah, they couldn't get there before the close of business so they wanted the agency to take the baby for the overnight because you know I might, I don't know what they thought I was going to do with the baby overnight you know other than feed him.

**GW:** Oh, I see what you're saying.

**LN:** It was, I was like really.

**GW:** Instead of coming to your house and picking up the baby the next day --

**LN:** Right, yeah and we ended up taking him to the Good Samaritan Agency to meet with them there, which is not a big deal, but.

**RG:** Do you have any understanding of why his mother was kind of holding things up in this adoption process before the tribe became involved?

**LN:** No, don't have any pieces of information other, some relative, I couldn't get, we had just gotten a new computer and I couldn't burn a CD of all the photos we had taken of the baby so, I had sent my email address. It's like I can email them, I just can't figure out how to get a CD out and at that point I really didn't care to try very hard. So they had sent me a couple of pictures and apparently there was an older child in the family and they sent pictures of the family being all excited to have him back, so. I don't object to birth families at all, but just the attitude that went with it...disturbing.

**RG:** Thinking about any or all of the children that have been in your home either permanently or in passing I suppose you could say, can you recall a time when you felt very positive about your time as a foster or adoptive parent? It doesn't necessarily have to be about a native child, just generally.

**BH:** I cared for a child from the time he was about fifteen months until he was eighteen months and he was a native child from the Passamaquoddy tribe and his mother was in a rehab situation and what I really liked about the situation was that when she was ready to spend time with him, although it was a little difficult to make this transition at that age, he would spend three and a half days with me and three and a half days with her until she was really ready for him to go home. And I say it was a little difficult because as I'd start getting ready to go, he'd go no nonny's house, no nonny's house. That's what he called his mom, anyway maybe that's too much information. Anyway, he wanted, you know he would, he would hide, he didn't want to go to his mother's house and then when I'd go to pick him up in reverse he'd say he

didn't want to come to my house, you know so the transition was somewhat difficult, but he knew the pattern well enough so that he anticipated it and as though even though it was upsetting, I felt that there was still a kind of consistency to it that even you know, he fought it, but it was still reassuring that that, I'm not sure if that makes sense, but I liked the plan better than just what you were talking about, quickly disrupting the child from a situation to make you know so that they're forced to transition quickly. And it also gave mother the chance to really get her feet under herself. You know and really get established back underneath the community. She was working, she had an apartment, by the time he actually transitioned home completely to her home. And we were able to stay in touch for quite some time afterwards.

So I thought it was you know a positive plan. It was one of the rare occasions when I actually worked with the social services both from Bangor DHHS and the Tribal Social Services. About that time it's been you know quite a few years, obviously nothing I've done is front and center like two years ago with this family, but still it was a good experience and those are the kinds of things that I think would help to make whatever the process is whether it's a native child or non-native child easier and more, you know, more tolerable because it is really hard. It tears at your heart strings when you, especially for children that are that young. You're doing everything practically, but breathing for them and when they leave, it hurts. Even if you have every intention of helping to make that transition.

**RG:** Does anyone else want to comment on an experience that was very positive as a foster or adoptive parent?

**LN:** Well we gave a, there was a young adult that, well eighteen is such angst-filled year and we tried to foster teenage girls and babies, so a pretty good match. We were all so happy to have the door hit her on the way out you know kind of thing. It's go, but we gave her a safe place to come home to and she became real family so that some of the other kids were asking if we could adopt her as an adult and we ended up doing that and that truly growing our family, not just having someone pass through and you know got to take off again and she's back and she's real family, you know. I like having lots of kids because I am a little on the crazy side obviously. You have to be.

**BK:** What keeps you guys in it? There's nothing positive to say, it must be something.

**RP:** I think there are a lot of positives. I mean it's exciting to see kids make progress. It's exciting to know that they can sleep at night without having to worry about their safety, without, you know they can have enough to eat, warm clothes and to see them coming from worrying about what they need for themselves to survive, they can be kids and they can enjoy life. So I think that's a positive.

I actually, my husband and I had placement of Native American on two different occasions and the first time, our very first placement in 1998 and we didn't realize that there was an Indian Welfare Act and so we took our very first placement and we had her for about ten days and the caseworker from the DHS office, we have court, well that's you know fine. We know we don't anticipate child going anywhere and we get a call on the cell phone coming back from our doctor's appointment that they want her now. They don't want us to go home and get her



things. They want her now. They want her turned over now. So our daughter who was thirteen at the time didn't get to say goodbye and cried for three days. She was heartbroken. I did go home and get her belongings, her clothing and I did end up, we met at the YMCA and the caseworker took her out of our vehicle and we went to my son's basketball game, so he got to say goodbye. My daughter did not.

So we take children into our homes and we feed them and we care for them and we rock them and we love them and then we don't even have five minutes to sit down as a family, so I think that that's something that moving forward, not only for native families, but also for foster families in general that we're humans too and that our hearts are involved in this. We don't do this just because we're bored, if you will. *(small laughter)* Our hearts are in this too, and you know we need that opportunity to be able to say goodbye. At that time, our first placement, I still didn't realize that she was moved and she went to a Native American family that was Passamaquoddy and she went to a tribal member, but the caseworker was kind of a little bit mystified, if you will, because there had been some domestic issues in the home that she went to in the past and she still went there.

And on our second placement we took two little girls and they were Penobscot tribal and we had taken them for respite and we had them for four days and the little four year old girl said they were living with an aunt at the time and she said auntie's not coming to pick us up and I called the caseworker and I said she said auntie's not picking them up. Oh, yep auntie's picking them up, so I took them back to DHS and I dropped them off and before I got home, which is about a thirty minute drive they called and wanted me to take placement of these children because auntie was not coming to pick them up. So I took placement and had them for just under two weeks and the caseworker called and said that they had a home for them and I was kind of mystified as why they had a home for them, but they had a Native American home, foster home where the children would be placed and at that time it really hit me that I could care for them enough that I could care for them for ten days, twelve days, fourteen days, but I could not care for them ongoing, even though I was, my brother-in-law is Maliseet and he's a tribal Maliseet. My nieces and nephews who we have been very, very close to, you know they're half Caucasian, white, whatever you want to call them and half Native American. They do fine. We do fine as extended family, but yet, and I live three miles from Indian Island and you know we could attend cultural events and we could foster that and we weren't even given the opportunity to have a discussion about it. It was just we have a Native American home and, but they did give us until the next morning. They were going to pick them up the next morning. So we had an overnight and that was all and so I will not take placement of a Native American child as a foster parent. No, I will not do that anymore.

**GW:** When you talked about the caseworker, did you mean the DHS caseworker?

**RP:** DHS caseworker.

**GW:** So the DHS person was the person you had the most contact with around telling you what was happening?

**RP:** Yes, I never had any contact with Tribal contact.

**GW:** You never had any contact with the Tribal Child Welfare?

**RP:** No.

**GW:** Folks at all?

**RP:** No.

**GW:** Okay, and what time period?

**RP:** Our first placement was in 1998 and I'm going to say the second placement that we had done respite and then ended up with placement of the children, I'm going to say that was probably around 2002, 2003.

**GW:** Okay.

**BK:** Thanks so much for sharing it.

**GW:** Yeah, really helpful.

**RG:** I do kind of want to stay on this a more positive topic, but I have one kind of side note, thinking about the kids who've been in your homes, the ones who've stayed for shorter periods of time, have they always been kind of an abrupt leaving or has the department handled it in a different way where there's a little bit more time I guess to allow the family to say goodbye because I can imagine that's a very, very difficult experience.

**BH:** I can't speak specifically to Native American, but I can tell you that many of the resource families, the foster and kinship families that call frequently indicate that there is not a good transition plan and that things were done rather abruptly.

**RP:** And sometimes even with cases where we have known that the children are going to return to the birth homes, you know we may be told children are going to return at the end of the month and you may get the phone call you know the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> or you know very early on, they're leaving this weekend or they're leaving you know soon. So sometimes the plan changes very, very quickly. So what we have, in our mind planned for to make a proper transition for these children and for the children that we have in our homes whether it be our birth children or other adopted or foster children. The plan that we have in our mind is then gone and we have to really do something different and something quick because what we do in our home is we have a going away party. We do something special. We give them a gift. We have that time where we can you know make sure that they have their envelopes with their addresses and they can mail us letters and we have their information and we can really reassure





them that hey you spent a long time in my home and you've become very, very attached. We've become attached to you. You're a part of our family forever and you're going to be okay and if you need anything call us. And so it's really important to have that time and we don't always get it.

**GW:** Do you have a sense, I guess all of you, what is it that contributes to that abrupt, in those situations when it is that abrupt moving of the child whether it's a native child or a non-native child, but in general what is it that drives that kind of abrupt decision-making, which is obviously not coming out of the real sense for what's going to be most beneficial for children or for the siblings or foster siblings of the kids who are in the home. I mean, what is it, I guess I'm getting at what goes on in the system what-- why does it happen? Any ideas?

**DM:** It's almost like a decision is made and they just, they jump on it.

**GW:** At court or at, I mean --

**DM:** It just happens when --

**GW:** And you're not, but you're not sitting in the room when that happens.

**DM:** Absolutely not. My grandson was released from the hospital with his mother into my home and I hadn't had continuous contact with DHS and was reassured that if he were ever taken into care he would not leave my home. He would remain in my home and the mother would have to leave. However, the night that he, and three days before he was actually taken into care I had been reassured again. The night that he was taken into care he was indeed taken into care and taken from my home. Happened to be placed with Stephanie, thank god and so it's like when the decision is made it's made. Even though he had been told repeatedly that that would not happen, it did happen and when he was returned to our home it was that quick. He happened to be at my home for a visit when I got the phone call saying you know your licensing has gone through and he can now stay with you. I guess they did give her the option that --

**SS:** That we could keep him for another night and bring him the next day or, but we had been, our feelings were prepared. We knew from the get-go that he was going to be leaving on Tuesday and that was like two months prior and so we were prepared and we spent a lot of time with them, so it was an easy transition and we're still very close to them, so it makes a big difference.

**DM:** Yeah, he still stayed.

**BH:** Sometimes the things that I hear, you know again, working with families is that the caseworkers feel like the, and this is a judgment on my part, but they get a sense that they think the resource family, the longer it goes on the more difficult it is for them to make the transition

so somehow they think if they do it quickly that they solved an issue. I mean there's some logic missing, but that does seem to be, and not in all cases, but in some situations, I've heard that.

**GW:** But supervisors of these caseworkers are thinking that way?

**BH:** You know like there really is a mentality that if you become very assertive in the things that you say and do with caseworkers that, it's almost like they suddenly believe that you're hostile towards them as opposed to being able to work with them. Say again, it's all speculation on my part, but it's done with years and years of history of seeing it play itself out, those who are the most assertive, which I think the department would think we're aggressive, those are the ones that they tend to make these more rash decisions about. I wasn't naming anybody.

**RP:** I think it's just a total lack of understanding would be my opinion. I don't know that they understand how our homes run from day to day. They don't understand perhaps that even though we didn't give birth to these children we can love these children and not only that, but our other children can love them as siblings. I don't think that there's a lot of thought sometimes into when they move a child quickly the effect that has on other foster children in the home or other adopted children. You know we have to go through and reassure our adopted children that no, you're here forever. We're mom and dad forever. Yeah, he's going back to his mom. You're never going back to live with your mom because some of our children have been very abused and they have those fears.

So we have to reassure some of them, our adopted children that they are staying, that they don't have to go. Our other foster children, I was here when he came and now he's leaving before I am, why? You know why is that happening? So that's a whole process with that child. So we have a lot of different dynamics going on and I think that you know when especially if they're going to family members that the thought is they're their family and they want them now and so you know we're going to do that. We're going to do it quickly. So I think that, especially if the Judge court orders. I think that, you know that especially is when we don't see a lot of time.

**DM:** But it's not healthy for the child that's being moved either. You know you take a child that's been in your care, whether it's you know two months, four months, six months, twelve months, they've gotten used to your routine. You know the child and they may be going to a family member who god forbid, has never even met the child. You know, so for there to be no transition time, in my opinion, is not healthy for the child that's being moved either, even though they're going with family, which is you know hopefully where they belong if it's a safe environment. It's still that rapid you know, to me it would just rip away their security. Like they would never feel like there was any you know 'am I here forever type thing because am I going to be ripped away again.' You know could I get up tomorrow morning and be --

**HS:** *(Inaudible 25:53.2)* issues.

**DM:** Yeah, you know.



**BH:** It's really hard to share you know with the person that's transitioning as their receiving home. It's really hard to explain to them the mentality that goes into that especially if they're family and I mean I hear again, more often from grandparents than in any other population, but some, you know some more traditional resource families, licensed foster homes that well they're babies they won't remember. You know, we remind them over and over again that you know we see daily how babies in utero remember the sounds and the smells of their biological mother, so you know try to explain to, in the families how important that is and how building on good memories just makes much more sense you know in making those transitions. You know so that families are cooperating with one another and working together as opposed to you know alienating one another in the idea that one place might be better than another. But it's not easy stuff at all. And everyone in this room has gone through it in one way or another or is going through it and it's tough.

**LN:** And how do you explain to the two- and three-year-old what foster care is?

**BH:** Oh yeah.

**LN:** The trauma, we pretty much had to drop out of the system for a little while because there was just no way we could get our little guy to understand. Even horrible placements, which are really horrible. There was one that we had to give up, we just couldn't do it anymore, but he couldn't understand that. It's like why do people just disappear on him? He's always worried about me if I'm not with him that I'm not coming back or I was going to die. Something was going to happen, so I would disappear. Yeah, now he's extremely verbal, so we're actually thinking that we're in a position that way we can foster some more, but we had to wait for him to grow up and absolutely we can have a conversation.

**RG:** What are some of the other challenges that you've encountered throughout your time as a foster or adoptive parent, either with a native child working with Tribal Child Welfare, working with the Department of Health and Human Services or dealing with a non-native child as well.

**SS:** I think it's hard because I've seen some caseworkers tell me one thing, tell the family another. Like they want to make everybody happy. Like they'll tell me what they think I want to hear. They'll tell the mom that they think they want to hear and that makes it really hard.

**DM:** Yeah, communication is a huge thing. Or they'll bring a child to your house and tell you that they have no issues and two days later you know you're ready to pull your hair out because the child should be in special needs or --

**RN:** Oh yeah.

**RP:** And one of the hardest things for me personally is when you have children in your home long term and you become very attached and it's time for the child to go home and you may be

very supportive of them going to be with their birth family, but conditions there aren't quite what they should be, but they're what is termed as good enough. So they kind of live on a different standard than we do. If our home looked like that it wouldn't be good enough. If we didn't supervise them to the degree that some of these children are not supervised in their birth homes, it wouldn't be good enough. So I think those, worrying if you will about how they're going to manage once they get home.

**BH:** I think that something else that's been brought out a few times is the idea that you know there may be sibling groups and one child is completely ready, willing and able to move on, but and had been in the foster home for a considerable period of time. But another child perhaps a younger child or maybe an older child that has really learned to understand what the dynamics is of his birth home and is at a point where does not believe that there's going to be enough change. So those two scenarios for kids I think is really hard. And it's hard on the resource families to know that those children are feeling that ambivalence and yet you know what I mean, ultimately we hear over and over that siblings do better when they're together and the barriers that brought the child into care at home have been reduced and there's definitely a better opportunity at least at that point in time and everything that's written on paper, so we have to believe that it's a better opportunity for the kids to go home. But for those two kids or three kids or however the number is, to be ambivalent and reluctant to make that transition I think is really hard on resource families, really hard. There's no easy answers for it.

**RG:** I'm very aware of not wanting to take up all of your time. So I just want to ask one question, Barbara actually already asked it, but I'm going to ask it again, mind reader. What is it that keeps all you in this?

**DM:** The children need us.

**LN:** Children have a right to be taken care of. I'm so passionate about so much emotion behind that value in my system or whatever you want to call it, is like every child has a right to be taken care of and I'll do what I can for the ones that I get lucky enough to, it's just so important to do, whether it goes well or not. We just do the best we can. Somebody has to step out there and what if nobody else will.

**HS:** I never knew what my purpose was in life until now, until I adopted my grandson. This is why I'm here, to, I was, to protect him. He was hurt very, very badly and I'm his protector, you know, and his mom and his grandmother and that's what I do. This is why I'm here, so, and it's very rewarding and I don't regret it one bit.

**RG:** Is there anything else anyone wants to add? Gail, do you have any last questions?

**GW:** No, just anything else that you think would be important for the Commission to know about or think about or mull over as we try and pull what we've heard from all the corners of Maine together.

**SS:** I think communication is just a really big thing for everybody.



**HS:** It's a big gap between, even when I was fostering, there's a huge, huge gap between foster parents and even kin, especially kin, which there shouldn't be at all I don't think between them and caseworkers and what the situation is. And also, I found it quite alarming after the fact, which I think that I should, it should've been, I think that it was pertinent information for me to know where, that my grandson was, the other children that they were fostering what their issues were, because they were quite severe and serious. And my grandson was there and for a long time while we hammered all this all out in court and it took, believe it or not, two and a half years and I'm his grandmother. It took two and a half years.

**BH:** You know we say it's communication, but it's even more than communication. It's almost like there's a sense of distrust from the individuals that come forward and say here I am, you know I am this child's family or I am, I've been with this child as a foster parent for the majority of this child's life. If there is enough trust to leave the child there for an extended period of time then there also ought to be enough trust to listen carefully to what's being shared whether you agree or disagree to just be a good listener and use that to help and support the placement and the transitions. And it seems to be the piece that's frequently missing. It's like there's a lot of judgment about why somebody would do something when I mean I hear Holly saying, I'm the grandmother. I mean how much more obvious does that get? And the same here, you know just why would there be any question about why I'm here. I know it isn't always that simple.

**HS:** Well there's that old saying, you know, the fruit doesn't fall far from the tree; however, that's not true, you know. That's not true. This child is my son's child, well my ex-husband raised my son. I raised my other three children. My other three children aren't like my son, you know. He has different morals, different ideals and yes I am his mother, but it's just different. You know and just because a child does, one of your children are in a situation doesn't mean that it was, had anything to do with them even, he wasn't even there. It was the mother, you know I don't want to get into details or anything, but you know he wasn't even there. You know, but because you say grandmother and your child, you know it was in foster. Oh, but what did your child do to do that? Well, he didn't do anything. He wasn't even there. You know, so it's like they lay blame on kin and that's the way I felt.

**GW:** So even though the department has supposedly moved towards more of an emphasis on kinship care, there's still some undercurrent --

**HS:** The blame game, the blame game.

**GW:** There's still undercurrents that --

**BH:** There's still work to be done and I mean everything within the system works slowly. I mean when I think about the last thirty years and where we are today, I mean there are many wonderful things going on, but there is still a lot of work to be done. And there's an enormous amount of turnover within the department, so you know when someone does get it, get how

help with the system, they may be gone and -- It's tough, it really is. There are good people. I mean you start out with all the same things, all the reasons why we're sitting around this table are the same reasons why those caseworkers and those relatives come forward because we love and care for kids and we want them to be protected, but the communication piece and the trust is not all the time, some of the time. I don't want to make it sound like it's a universal, forever problem.

**GW:** Well thank you all very much. It was really helpful. I really appreciate. I know we really appreciate your thoughts and your honesty and putting yourself out here. We really appreciate it.

**RG:** Thank you.

**[END OF RECORDING]**