



Rise Parent Focus Groups – What We Heard

In Spring 2015, Rise parent leaders ran focus groups with 40 parents who had recent or open child welfare cases in New York City. Some positives were that two-thirds of parents reported that their caseworkers understood them and their families, and the same percent reported receiving an encouraging relationship their attorneys. Through discussions and questionnaires, this is what we heard:

Information

The biggest topic in every group was the need for information. Parents wanted:

- Orientations to the foster care process and their rights
- Written information on the process and their rights
- Trainings on preparing for visits, courts, FTCS, reunification
- Resource lists explaining service options so they feel they have a choice
- All of these trainings/resources developed and led by other parents

Parent advocates

- Only half of parents reported contact with foster care agency parent advocates
- Parents wanted to meet parent advocates from day one and get more support

Visits

- The biggest complaint was visits cancelled with little notice and visits not made up
- Parents wanted more opportunities to visit in places where kids feel good
- Few had visit hosting or coaching and many wanted it
- Parents wanted parent-led trainings for case planners to understand how visits feel

Foster parent relationship

- Many parents did not feel they had a voice in placement, said they did not have parent-to-parent meetings, and wanted more information about the foster family from day one
- Most felt agencies did not take their concerns about foster parents seriously

FTCs/Service Planning

Two typical quotes: “All the people that don’t know me were there,” and, “They don’t ask you, they tell you”

- Parents wanted more preparation and information on who will be in the room and what will be discussed, and more support from parent advocates during these meetings

Trauma and Treatment

- Parents wanted more information about trauma and more opportunities to access trauma-focused services for themselves and/or their children
- Parents wanted more opportunities for family therapy while their children were in care

Encouragement as People

A quote: “To improve the system, it’s not just about taking away the negative, it’s about making a positive”

- Parents wanted to train staff on how to make parents feel recognized and encouraged
- Parents wanted support in the challenges of adulthood beyond parenting, such as offering connections to job training programs and a place to check email or write a resume