



Is **Project KEEP** a meaningful support for resource parents?

Most children experience multiple placement moves while in foster care.¹ In fact, children experience an average of 2.8 placements during their first stay in foster care.² Placement disruptions are due to a range of factors, most frequently because of a mismatch between a child and the resource family values and beliefs, or a lack of resource family skills and supports to effectively address a child's unique needs.

Programs are available, however, that assist in building the specific skills that foster and kinship parents need to successfully maintain children in their homes and help them thrive. These training programs create positive changes in parenting knowledge, attitudes, and self-efficacy, and result in improved child behaviors. One program that has demonstrated compelling results in improving child behaviors and reducing placement disruption is Project KEEP.

What is Project KEEP?

Project KEEP was developed at the Oregon Social Learning Center and was first implemented in Oregon more than 20 years ago. Since then, KEEP has been implemented in the United States (San Diego; Baltimore; Yakima, Washington; New York City; and throughout Tennessee), Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Project KEEP is an evidence-based intervention for foster and kinship parents of children 4 to 12 years old. The program is designed to build parents' skills for dealing with children's behavioral and emotional challenges and to support them in



Is Project KEEP a meaningful support for resource parents?

using these new skills. The program includes weekly, 90-minute facilitated conversations on topics such as limit-setting and boundaries, discipline strategies, promoting school success, and intra-family power dynamics. Foster and kinship parents are taught methods for creating a safe environment, encouraging child cooperation, and balancing encouragement and limits. Other sessions deal with difficult behaviors, promoting school success, encouraging positive peer relationships, and managing stress brought on by providing foster care.

KEEP groups typically include seven to 10 foster parents who attend 16 sessions that focus on practical, research-based parenting techniques. KEEP does not use a one-size-fits-all curriculum. While the facilitators draw from an established protocol manual, they tailor each session to the specific needs, circumstances, and priorities of participating parents and the children they care for. KEEP groups are interactive, participatory, flexible, and fun, synthesizing the real and current experiences of foster and kinship parents with lessons learned from research about effective parenting. The groups emphasize active learning, and concepts are typically presented through role-plays and videotapes.

Essential elements

Key components of the program include:

- Foster/kinship families receive hands-on instruction in behavior management methods, and family group sessions weave curriculum content into group discussions.
- Foster/kinship families receive weekly calls from the facilitator or co-facilitator to troubleshoot problems foster parents may be having in implementing the assignment from the week's training as well as to collect data on the child's challenging behaviors.
- If the foster/kinship family misses a parent-training session, material from the missed session is delivered during a home visit at a time convenient for the foster parent.

Implementation considerations

Following a five-day training by the KEEP implementation team, Project KEEP can be delivered by child welfare caseworkers and paraprofessionals. Experience with group settings, interpersonal skills, motivation, and knowledge of children are key considerations for selection of facilitators and co-facilitators. Certified

This training is very open and nonjudgmental. It is offered in a hands-on environment, where the most diverse of foster parents can relate to other foster parents and gain important and useful parenting skills. These skills not only benefit the foster children but also everyone in the home.

— RANDY AND BRITTANY LOWE
FOSTER PARENTS

Is Project KEEP a meaningful support for resource parents?

facilitators can then become KEEP local consultants and trainers, which involves five additional days of training and six to 12 months of ongoing contact with the implementation team.

Implementation of KEEP involves:

- Initial discussions about the model and how it fits with current practice
- Readiness planning, including development of an implementation timeline
- Five-day training for facilitators, on-site supervisors, and support personnel
- Weekly telephone consultation using recordings of group sessions
- Implementation progress reviews
- Ongoing monitoring of fidelity using video recordings of group sessions and data uploaded to a secure website

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Project KEEP has been shown to decrease placement changes and increase family reunification rates.³ It has been rated by the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare as having “Promising Research Evidence.”⁴

Researchers have conducted four randomized controlled trials with more than 1,500 foster and kinship parents. These studies indicate that Project KEEP leads to:

- Increased rates of foster parent retention
- Decreased child behavior problems
- Decreased levels of foster and kinship parent stress
- Implementation considerations

1 Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare. (2010). *Promoting placement stability*. CW360. Retrieved from http://cascw.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/CW360_2010.pdf

2 American Bar Association's Legal Center for Foster Care and Education. (2014). *Fostering success in education: national factsheet on the educational outcomes of children in foster care*. Retrieved from <http://cdn.fc2success.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/National-Fact-Sheet-on-the-Educational-Outcomes-of-Children-in-Foster-Care-Jan-2014.pdf>

3 Greeno, E. J., Uretsky, M. C., Lee, B. R., Moore, J. E., Barth, R. P., & Shaw, T. V. (2016). Replication of the KEEP Foster and Kinship Parent Training program for youth with externalizing behaviors. *Children and Youth Services Review* 61, 75-82.

4 The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare. (2017). KEEP (Keeping foster and kin parents supported and trained). Retrieved from Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare. (2010). *Promoting Placement Stability*. CW360. Retrieved from http://cascw.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/CW360_2010.pdf

P 800.228.3559

P 206.282.7300

F 206.282.3555

casey.org | KMResources@casey.org

