

Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition to Publish Results from Statewide Foster Parents Survey

Report finds one third of New York's foster parents struggling with lost jobs/pay cuts due to pandemic.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 12, 2020 - The Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York (AFFCNY) is scheduled to publish "Fostering New York's Children During a Global Pandemic" a report of the responses generated by the non-profit organization's 2020 Foster Parents' Survey.

Scheduled to be released on November 18, 2020, the report is the result of a several months' long effort by the state's adoptive and foster parent association, AFFCNY, to capture the economic and racial profiles of the foster families caring for the state's most vulnerable children. The survey also provided a unique window where parents could have their voices heard and share details about the personal challenges facing their families and the children in their care during a global pandemic.

A total of 656 foster parents responded, reporting significant impacts on their economic status as a result of COVID-19 and the current levels of state subsidies. Among other alarming results one third of foster families are struggling with lost jobs and/or pay cuts due to the pandemic, close to **one fifth of the respondents statewide reported that one or both foster parents lost jobs due to COVID-19 and over sixteen percent reported that one or both parents had taken a pay cut due to COVID-19.**

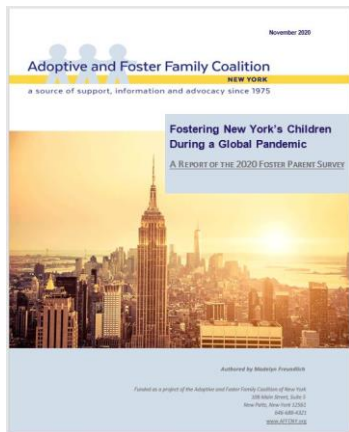
Additionally, racial backgrounds of both foster families and the children they serve were gathered, providing a realistic picture of the states' extremely diverse foster families.

Funded and designed by the organization, renowned adoption researcher, Madelyn Freundlich, volunteered her time and expertise to author the report. The survey was comprised of closed-ended questions on demographic backgrounds, experience, the economic impact and housing status as well as an open-ended comment. The qualitative data was analyzed through coding commentary into **key themes that tell tales of families facing job loss and loss of income, increased expenses, extended court processes, and increased family separations.** The report tells tales of families' frustrations with marked decreases in support services as well as the families' remarkable degree of resilience.

"We have bonded more as a family and also have been able to work together to address many of the issues.... that have made a resurgence. We've had the luxury of time together to address whatever arises and find a solution together," commented one foster family.

Initially distributed from August 6, 2020 through September 30, 2020, the data collection period was extended until October 10, 2020 to capture additional responses from New York City foster parents. As New York City families were underrepresented in comparison to the rest of the state when the initial results were tabulated, a targeted outreach to New York City foster parents included partnering with the New York City Administration of Children's Services for survey distribution. In the end, respondents represented all New York State counties with almost one-quarter (23.3%) of the respondents residing in

New York City. Statewide, three quarters (75.5%) of respondents reported being active foster parents, with the remaining respondents reporting previously fostering and then adopting children from foster care. Preliminary research indicates that this is the largest statewide survey specifically targeting foster parents.



AFFCNY’s commitment to families caring for the most vulnerable children in New York State has not wavered during the pandemic. After immediately shifting all support services to virtual platforms, Coalition families have been able to consistently find help through AFFCNY affiliated groups, online trainings and the HelpLine as well as the newly created only support community. Data collected in early summer 2020 indicated a definitive shift in the needs of the families served. For the first time ever, respite and advocacy appeared as the most requested services sought by parents through the HelpLine. Given these results, AFFCNY made the decision to survey foster parents to document the experiences of the New Yorkers who continued to volunteer to bring children into their homes and families during a pandemic.

“It is always our mission and intention to use any information we gather to support and advocate for families in NYS, so knowing the direct needs of families and the challenges they face, helps us provide better support services at the Coalition,” states Pat O’Brien, Executive Director.

The published report will be available to the public on the Coalition’s website, AFFCNY.org. on the release date. Advanced copies will be released to media inquiries upon request. **Foster parents contributed 497 comments** that described their experiences in parenting children during the ongoing pandemic and a **great majority were open to be contacted for further information and to schedule interviews.**

About the Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York

Incorporated in 1975, the Coalition unites foster, adoptive and kinship care families, giving them a voice and providing support, information and advocacy. By fostering communication and collaboration between families, agencies and concerned citizens, we seek to ensure the stability, well-being and permanency of all children. Our vision is that no foster, adoptive or kinship care family in New York State will feel alone or unsupported and that all such families will have the tools, support and community they need to nurture their children and be role models for others.



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