

LGBTQ Families - Research Article Summaries**17. LGB Foster Parents:
Successes and Challenges of Fostering Experiences with the Child Welfare System**

Downs, A. C., & James, S. E. (2006). Gay, lesbian, and bisexual foster parents: Strengths and challenges for the child welfare system. *Child Welfare Journal*, 85, 281-298.

Participants included 60 lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) foster parents providing care for children in 14 public (state or county) agencies in 13 geographically diverse U.S. states. Thirty-minute interviews were conducted regarding the successes and challenges that LGB foster parents had experienced.

Successes of participants included gratifying and meaningful parenting experiences, as well as increased motivation for adopting after fostering. A majority felt they were effective foster parents because they were aware and tolerant of the unique qualities and differences of foster youth. Men participants were more likely to gain support from friends, school, and the community, while women participants were more likely to gain support from friends, family, church, the foster care agency, therapy and support groups. Both indicated that at least one source of their support was LGB-affiliated.

Challenges of participants included difficult, insensitive, and inappropriate social workers, state or local laws hindering successful parenting by LGB adults, failure to acknowledge parents' partners, and lack of support by the system in recognizing the important role of LGB parents.

Participants were racially diverse, commonly in their 30s and 40s, and well-educated. Two thirds were partnered for an average of ten years. Women participants generally had more foster youth than men participants did. Both provided for more male (average age of 7) than female foster youth. The age range of foster youth was 1 to 21 years. A majority of parents included that their youth were either not LGBTQ-identified or too young to have identified with a sexual orientation.