North American Council on Adoptable Children

In September 2010, NACAC began surveying adoptive families across the United States and Canada about their adoption support services. More than 1,100 adoptive parents have responded. Of the parents who responded, 92% were mothers and 8% were fathers.

Reasons for adoption include: to have more children (47%), to provide permanence for a foster child, and to gain connections.

Surveyed parents adopted more than 2,590 children and youth. More than a third of families adopted sibling groups, with 9% of children adopted from foster care.

When asked what services they needed but did not use, respondents most often noted (see chart for others):

- family retreat (25%)
- mentor for the child (25%)
- support group for the child (24%)
- information about community resources (19%)
- respite care (19%)

Other supports mentioned were:

- family connections (25%), information about community resources (30%), and special education information (20%)

Parent feedback also revealed recurring themes about positive practices and approaches that parents suggested these actions:

- Encourage all adoption and child welfare professionals to receive in-service training on attachment and mental health issues and treatments.
- Take the stigma out of asking for help.
- Spend time with other families who have similar experiences; such contact can normalize issues families face every day.
- Make information and resources easily accessible.

Recommendations

NACAC asked parents to rank the top four advocacy issues that we should address in the next year, in line with what we have been working on, with the following most often rated number one:

- adoption competency training
- mental health services
- training and education for parents
- support for birth families

Other supports mentioned were:

- family connections (25%), information about community resources (30%), and special education information (20%)