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 to the survey, which found that adoptive families must have ongoing and varied support to successfully parent.

Of the parents who responded, 92% were mothers and 78% were fathers. The reasons for adoption included a desire to have more children (47%), to adopt a sibling group (43%), to provide permanence for a foster child (35%), and to adopt a child from another country (27%).

Surveyed parents adopted more than 2,590 children and youth. More than a third of families adopted sibling groups, and more than 10% adopted children from another country. When asked what services they needed but did not use, respondents most often noted:

- 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 included adoption/child welfare connections (25%), information about community resources (30%), and special education information (20%).

Parent feedback also revealed recurring themes about positive practices and approaches, including:

- Encourage all adoption and child welfare professionals to receive training in attachment and mental health issues and treatments.
- Take the stigma out of asking for help.
- Spend time with other adoptive families with 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 coming year, and the results showed that adoption competency training was the top priority, followed by mental health services and training and education for parents.

Other recommendations included:

- More funding for adoption services.
- Support for foster care families.
- Information about community resources.

In conclusion, adoptive families need ongoing and varied support to successfully parent. NACAC's survey findings highlight the importance of providing comprehensive support services to adoptive families.