

Dear Participant,

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with the Bloom team about your life experiences. We learned a lot by talking with you and other caregivers. We are grateful to you for walking us through your journey.

Part of this process is also to show you that you're not alone. We heard so much about isolation and wanting to connect with others who understand. We hope this is a small step to seeing what you as a group can do.

What We Heard:

The journey from placement to permanency is tough – you're met with challenges at every step.

- There is a lot of pressure to make a choice right away about taking in a child. The majority of you told us that the decision to take children in is because of love and family connection. This was even if you didn't have all the right supports in place.
- Once you have the child, it's difficult to get the items (cribs, clothing, etc.) you need to create a stable home for your child to thrive.
- Besides the challenges of having the right support, we also heard a lot about fear. Fear that the child could be taken away from your home at any point, for reasons outside your control.

Placement is a confusing process.

- With so many rules, it's easy to get lost, all while dealing with your child's trauma and learning to re-parent.
- There is a big desire for real support (emotional, material goods, guidance) during hand-off as you get your child settled so you don't need to bear the burden of handling it all.

There is a big need for more financial resources for the kids in your care.

- TANF is there, but its rule for parents to pay child support feels like you have to choose between your child and grandchild.
- Support programs' one time voucher options are helpful and appreciated, but they aren't enough to meet your families' financial needs.

There are not enough emotional resources available to you and your kids.

- Support groups create spaces for you to emotionally connect with other caregivers, but they can be difficult to come by - they aren't offered in other languages, and they can be far away in rural areas.
- Therapy has been really helpful, but it is difficult to get - finding therapists that are affordable and don't have a waitlist can leave you and your kids feeling abandoned.

The permanency process is filled with legal challenges.

- The process to make things permanent is super complicated and barely anyone helped clarify what the options even were for your situation.
- There are a lot of additional costs here - processing and legal fees - and very little options to find affordable lawyers.

We heard about the many obstacles in the child welfare system to care for your kids. There is a desire to be able to access more financial, emotional, and legal support.

Beyond your needs, we also heard about the immense amount of love you have for your kids and how hard you all are working to create environments for them to thrive, while keeping your family together. We are in awe of everything you do and feel honored to have heard even a small bit about it.

Thank you all again for your continued resiliency and perseverance. This is only a summary of what we heard. Our next step will be crafting clear actions for DCYF to take to improve things for kinship caregivers like you.

If you feel like we missed something critical or didn't capture something correctly, please let us know at bloom-kinship@bloomworks.digital. Thanks again for your time.

Sincerely,

The Bloom Kinship Team