

Office of  
LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR GENERAL  
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**REPORT NUMBER 2002-04**

**JUNE 2002**

**A Performance Audit  
of the  
Utah Foster Care Foundation**

The Utah Foster Care Foundation (UFCF) has made some improvements to the foster care system but they have not achieved the ambitious vision for increased numbers of foster homes, volunteers and fund raising. Consequently, compliance with all of the statutory requirements and conditions of the contract has not been perfect. The foundation has provided some valuable services to the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and to the foster care community, but their services are expensive. The organization has existed for three years and perhaps now is the time to review the goals and focus their direction and re-evaluate some activities.

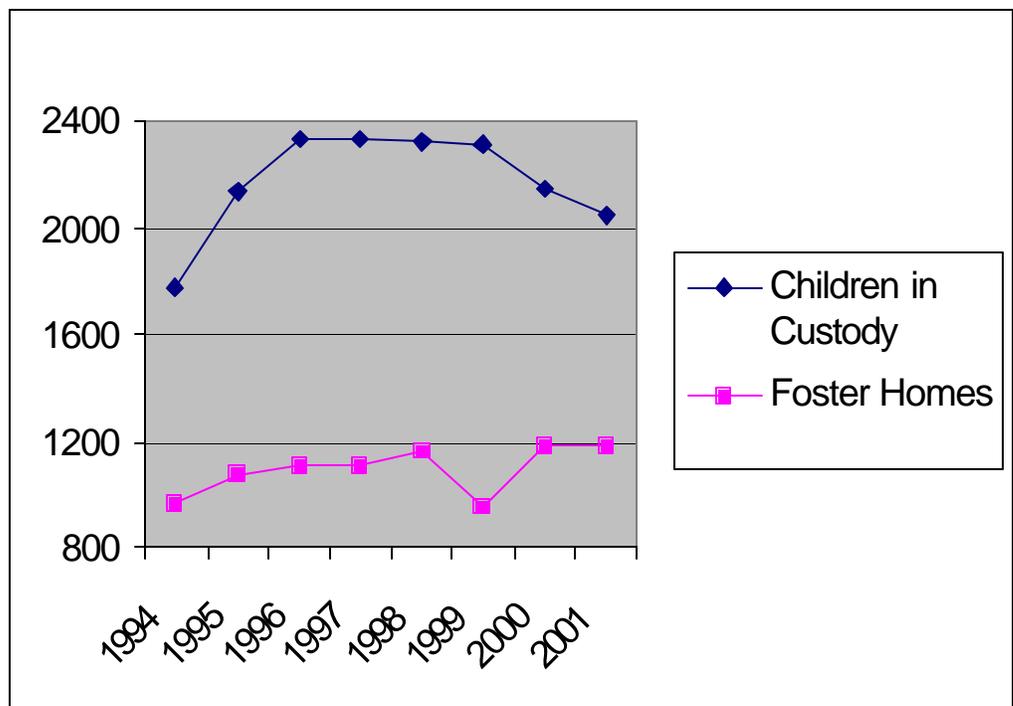
**Foster Care Foundation Is a Unique Initiative**

The Foster Care Foundation began as an initiative by Governor Leavitt. In June of 1997, as part of his ALERT Declaration, the Governor set a statewide goal to have 3,000 licensed foster care families by the year 2000. To achieve the goal, the Governor's idea was to create a partnership between private and public interests to recruit, train, and support foster parents for the Division of Child and Family Services. The state was facing some difficult challenges within the foster care system and the Governor commissioned a committee, headed by the Lieutenant Governor, to design a business plan for a private, non-profit organization which later came to be known as the Utah Foster Care Foundation.

Idea for a foster care foundation was conceived because the foster population was growing rapidly while the number of foster homes was fairly constant.

The business plan for the UFCF portrayed an environment where the number of foster homes available was not keeping pace with the number of children needing placement. The number of children in state custody had reached an all time high of nearly 2,350 and it was increasing at an average annual rate of 8 percent and was expected to continue increasing. Conversely, the number of basic foster homes statewide had been relatively steady at around 1,000—sometimes a little higher and sometimes a little lower as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Foster Care Population.** The foster population grew rapidly from 1994 --1996 but started to decrease in 1999.



The Utah Foster Care Foundation was incorporated in October 1998.

The 1998 Legislature authorized DCFS to contract with a private, non-profit organization to recruit and train foster parents and child welfare volunteers on a statewide or regional basis (**Utah Code 62A-4a-107.5**). In October 1998, the Utah Foster Care Foundation was incorporated as a private, non-profit organization with the purpose of “increasing the number of dedicated foster parent candidates in Utah by increasing the quality of training for foster parents; improving support mechanisms for foster parents; and, actively recruit, train, and retain volunteers to serve

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**It was believed that the foundation could cost-effectively recruit and train foster parents and child welfare volunteers.**

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within the child welfare system in the State of Utah.”

The first contract was signed in September 1999 transferring the responsibility to recruit and train from DCFS to the foundation and by January 2000 the foundation was operating statewide.

The intention was that an organization of this type would be ideally positioned to cultivate financial and operational assistance from businesses, churches, schools and other civic organizations. It was presumed that the foundation would be able to cost-effectively recruit and train foster families and it would create a network of foster family support services through partnerships with other civic organizations. In addition, it would strive to bring a significant increase to the number of qualified child welfare volunteers. These would be well-trained and certified volunteers who could involve the community with child welfare issues and assist with temporary respite care, thus reducing costs.

### **Ambitious Vision Has Not Been Realized**

During the first year of operations, the foundation was given some ambitious goals. One goal was to dramatically increase the number of licensed foster families so that there would be at least three options available for placement. Another goal was to significantly increase the number of well-trained qualified volunteers in the child welfare system. The foundation also hoped to raise large amounts of capital through development activities to cover the incremental costs of their existing programs as well as allow for expansion and creation of new programs. The foundation has now been in operation for over three years and these ambitious goals have not been achieved as originally planned.

### **Foster Family Goals Were Not Realistic**

The initial foster family goals for the foundation were based on increasing historical growth rates and projections for continued growth in the foster child population. Their strategy was to conduct heavy, statewide recruitment of a general nature to bolster the numbers of foster homes and create a better ratio of foster homes to foster children. The objectives were well-intentioned but the goals were not realistic nor well thought out. Utah did not need more generic foster parents; rather, they needed specific foster parents to fit the needs of specific foster children in

certain geographic regions of the state. The foundation has since recognized the importance of recruiting the type of foster parents needed and is now focusing on specific recruitment plans.

**Initial Goal Was 3,000 Families by 2000.** Because the population of children in custody was increasing at a significant rate, there was a sense of urgency coming from the governor’s office and from DCFS to increase the number of licensed foster homes. As mentioned earlier, the Governor stated in his June 1997 initiative that in order to keep up with the growing foster population, the state needed 3,000 foster homes by the year 2000. Since the foundation was established with this goal in mind, the business plan describes an organization that would cost-effectively recruit and train a large number of foster families in a short time in order to meet the needs of the burgeoning foster population.

The foundation was eager to meet this goal and they set forth on a large scale recruitment campaign of the general public to boost the number of foster parents. However, the foundation’s board and staff soon realized that the goal was not realistic. As early as June 1999, before the foundation had even started recruiting families, the board discussed the need for a “reality check” on expectations. The board noted that getting 1,500 foster families would be an important achievement, and the goal was later lowered to that amount. However, there have never been more than 1,272 licensed basic foster family homes.

**Utah Doesn’t Need 3,000 Foster Families.** While the foundation didn’t achieve the goal of 3,000 families by 2000, we don’t believe the state needed that many foster homes. As stated earlier, when the foundation began, the number of children in custody was about 2,350 and increasing significantly each year. An unforeseen occurrence is that the number of children in custody actually began to decrease as shown in Figure 1.

In addition, only about half of the children in custody are served in the type of foster homes that are the focus of the foundation’s efforts. The foundation recruits and trains people for ‘family foster homes’ which includes basic foster care and specialized care. They are not concerned with recruitment and training for categories such as group homes, residential group treatment homes, or other treatment foster homes. As shown in Figure 2, recent placement data from DCFS shows that the family foster home category, which is served by the foundation, accounts for about 51 percent of the total children in custody.

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There was a sense of urgency to recruit and train a large number of foster parents in a short time.

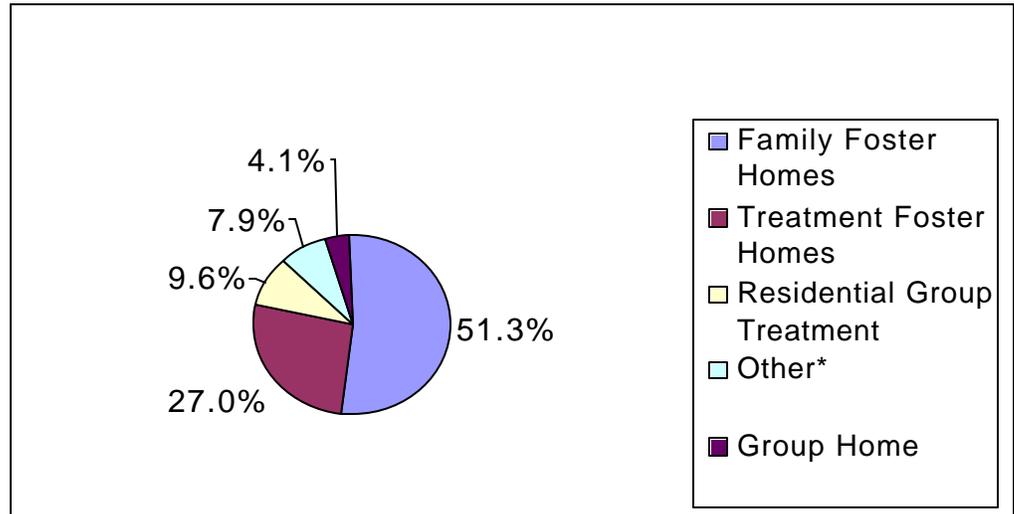
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A large number of generic foster homes was not needed.

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**Figure 2. Child Custody Placements—February 2002.** Only 51% of the foster population is served by the foundation.



\* Other placements include trial home placement, Independent Living, runaway, and adoptive home.

Thus, of the 2,050 children in custody in December 2001, the foundation should be concerned with the placement for only about 1,050 foster children. Many of these children are siblings and have been placed together in the same foster home—meaning that fewer homes are actually used.

While the state doesn't need 3,000 foster homes, the intention was that there would be several choices for each foster child in order to make the best possible match to foster parents. We agree that it is important for DCFS to have a supply of unused or available foster homes to place children who enter the foster care system, or who need to be moved to a new placement. The available foster homes also should be in the locations needed and willing to accept the type of child needing placement so DCFS regional offices have options available when making placement decisions.

**Current Foster Family Goals Are More Focused on Specific Needs.** The goal to quickly recruit and train large numbers of foster parents may have been attainable but it was not well thought out. While the number of foster parents did increase during the first year of operations, we were told that many of those newly recruited and licensed did not receive placements and they eventually terminated their licenses.

After discussions with DCFS and learning that mass recruitment was not needed nor beneficial, the foundation and DCFS mutually agreed to adjust their recruitment strategy and goals to something more beneficial and realistic. The goal was restated in the contract for fiscal year 2001, and it specified the foundation would strive to increase the number of trained and licensed families to 1,500 by December 31, 2000. This new goal was only half the original recommendation.

One year later, the recruitment strategy and goals were again adjusted for the current contract. The goal to have 1,500 foster families statewide was taken out of the contract and no total number was identified. Rather, the recruitment goal was modified to recruit and train as many new foster families as are needed in each region, based on a needs assessment for that area. For example, each region would have an annual specific goal for new recruits who would be trained and prepared for licensing and all regional goals combined would become the statewide recruitment goal. The foundation's 2001 statewide goal was to recruit and train at least 370 new families by December 2001 and to aid DCFS and the Office of Licensing in increasing the number of licensed foster care providers. During 2001, UFCF exceeded their goals by recruiting and training 462 new resource families. During the same calendar year, the Office of Licensing statistics indicate that 483 new families were licensed. Recruitment efforts are now more focused on the demographic needs of a region based upon the makeup and number of children in custody within the region.

### **Volunteer Efforts Have Been Reduced**

As with foster family goals, the foundation's volunteer program has not achieved the original goals. Volunteer recruitment and training, while still important, have lower priority as more attention is being diverted to the retention of foster families and to the development of licensed foster family cluster groups. This is especially true for volunteers who are trained to provide relief care and support to foster parents. We discussed volunteer activities with foundation workers in several regions and found that outside of the Salt Lake Valley region, there are very few volunteers available for help with relief care or transportation of foster children. In fact, volunteer utilization outside of Salt Lake City is very limited and it seems they are recruited only as needed and used primarily for help with foundation events supporting foster families. Volunteer efforts in the outlying regions have largely been applied to less important tasks such as

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**Volunteer network became a lower priority as attention was drawn to retention.**

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distributing literature, or assisting with an event. The volunteers who can actually provide help with foster children are in very short supply.

**Business Plan Emphasized Volunteers.** It states that the second mission of the foundation is “to encourage wide-spread volunteer participation in the child welfare system.” It describes a network of volunteers who are recruited, certified, and trained for specialized applications or care of foster children. Every volunteer would have a criminal background check and become certified at either a basic, advanced, or specialized level. Depending on the level of certification, the volunteers would be able to perform a variety of tasks. For example,

- **Basic certification** would allow volunteers to answer phones, file documents, make photocopies, and other tasks that do not require care or supervision of foster children.
- **Advanced certification** would allow volunteers to transport children, provide temporary care, or tutor foster children.
- **Specialized certification** would allow volunteers to be co-trainers of foster parents or to provide personal consulting or assistance to foster parents.

This diverse network of volunteers would be recruited and trained by the foundation and they would be committed and dedicated to supporting foster parents.

In addition, the statute and the initial contract both emphasize the importance of volunteers. They state that the contracting organization shall agree to increase the number of child welfare volunteers, develop a strategic plan for recruitment and training, seek participation of volunteer organizations, provide orientation and training, inform volunteers of options for service, and facilitate the placement and certification of volunteers. In the initial contract, 18 percent of the budget was to be committed to the development of a volunteer network.

**Volunteer Program Began Strong but Soon Declined.** In the first year of operations, the volunteer program was strong—with five volunteer coordinators, one in each region of the state. These coordinators were working to cultivate a network of volunteers to help out with the various needs within the region. The emphasis was on recruitment and training

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Volunteer numbers and hours of service decreased significantly after the first year.

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of both direct volunteers and indirect volunteers. The direct volunteers were those people who were screened and trained in foster care and could have direct contact with children in custody. The indirect volunteers were those who could help out with filing documents, photocopying or other tasks without direct contact with foster children. While the program was in the development stage, the number of volunteer recruits was growing and the number of hours of volunteer service was increasing significantly. During the first year of operations, the foundation benefitted from the services of both direct and indirect volunteers. They reported that volunteers, statewide, contributed over 3,300 hours of service. During calendar year 2000, volunteers contributed a total of over 9,300 hours of service as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Volunteer Program—Statewide Totals.** The volunteer program began to decline in year 2001.

	Direct Service Volunteers			Indirect Service Volunteers		
	Calendar Yr 2000	Calendar Yr 2001	Percent Change	Calendar Yr 2000	Calendar Year 2001	Percent Change
Average Monthly Volunteers	52.2	40.1	-23%	64.0	20.0	-69%
Total Hrs of Service	1,748	1,349	-23%	7,556	1,875	-75%

However, the direction of the volunteer program was changed in early 2001. The foundation recognized a critical need to keep trained and licensed foster families in the system and they shifted the emphasis from developing a volunteer network to the retention of foster families. Several volunteer coordinator positions were eliminated and the average number of volunteers, and consequently hours of service, decreased significantly as shown in Figure 3. Volunteer recruitment and utilization were put at a lower priority because retention became a significant and increasing concern. Consequently, the volunteer program has not turned out like it was envisioned.

Even when the volunteer program was emphasized, it doesn't seem to have been very effective. In the statewide reports for the year 2000, there was an average of 52 direct service volunteers available per month but only 22 (41%) were used each month. In other words, 30 (58%) of the total direct volunteers were not used at all. Those that were used contributed less than 7 hours per month of service. To be more effective,

volunteers should have a higher utilization rate and they should be used more than just a few hours per month, especially if they are trained and certified.

### Fund Raising Has Not Been Productive

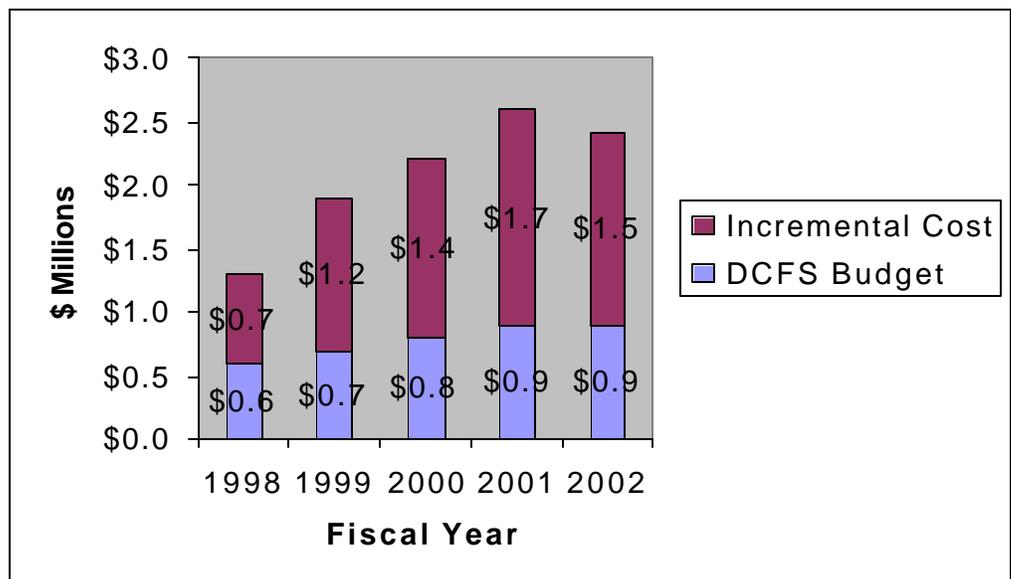
Fund raising was intended to be a major source of revenue but it has provided less than expected.

Initially, fund raising was intended to be a major source of revenue for the foundation. DCFS, through its contractual agreement, would fund a significant portion of the foundation's operations but large amounts of additional revenue would be needed to fund incremental growth and to fulfill the mission of the foundation. Unfortunately, the foundation's fund-raising efforts have had limited success.

The business plan outlined a scenario where the foundation would aggressively solicit contributions from private sources such as private foundations, companies, and citizens interested in providing for the welfare of children. The plan estimated that during the first five years of operations the cost of recruitment and training would increase about 15 percent per year. But, in order to fund the incremental growth and development of programs the way they were envisioned, additional funding would be needed—\$700,000 in FY 1998, increasing to \$1.5 million in FY 2002, as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Estimated Funding Requirements FY 1998 - 2002.**

Initially it was hoped that fund raising would fill a large portion of the incremental costs.



The contract also implied that fund raising would be a significant portion of the foundation's budget. In the budget statement for the first annual contract, the line item for special fund raising shows the foundation estimated \$1,169,500 would be collected from donors to fund incremental growth and program development. The funding for operations awarded by DCFS in the initial contract was only \$1,000,000. This implies that the foundation anticipated raising funds to account for more than 50 percent of the total organizational revenues.

Since the first contract was written, the foundation has discovered that fund raising has not been as productive as anticipated. Actual fund-raising amounts according to foundation accounting records are summarized in the Figure 5.

**Figure 5. UFCF Fund raising Summary.** Cash and non-cash donations have decreased dramatically since the first year.

Time Period	Donation Types		Totals
	Cash	Non-cash	
January - June 1999	\$ 1,101,050	\$ 1,217,898*	\$ 2,318,948*
July - June 2000	67,782	104,741	172,523
July - June 2001	56,703	161,156	217,859
July - February 2002	27,098	---	27,098
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,252,633</b>	<b>\$ 1,483,795*</b>	<b>\$ 2,736,428*</b>

SOURCE: Utah Foster Care Foundation accounting records

\* Includes \$1.2 million in stock that declined in value. About one-third of the stock has been sold for a loss of \$150,000. As of May 31, 2002, the remaining stock is valued at \$380,000 below the stated value.

As shown above, the largest cash and non-cash donations occurred between January and June 1999, before the foundation was under contract. These contributions were largely due to the efforts of the Governor. Since the initial big contributions in 1999, fund-raising efforts have not produced much. They have decreased considerably each year; and, in the past year, they did not raise enough cash to cover the cost of the development officer's salary.

However, foundation staff report that their accounting records do not include all donations. For example, a total of \$109,850 in vouchers to Deseret Industries received in October 2001 is not included. Many other smaller donations of gift certificates, tickets, clothing, books, and other items also are not included in the accounting records shown in Figure 5. Foundation staff report total donations of \$383,000 (including \$335,354 non-cash) in fiscal year 2001 and \$283,000 (including \$250,994 non-cash) in the first eight months of fiscal year 2002. These amounts include the estimated value of volunteer time at \$15.39 per hour. While foundation staff believe the donations they have received are significantly greater than is shown in Figure 5, they agree that donations are much less than they had hoped to attract.

The foundation offers several explanations for their inability to reach their fund-raising goals. The foundation explained that fund raising was more difficult than they expected and that many potential donors were reluctant to contribute because they considered foster care the responsibility of the state. They felt that fund raising should be expected to help fund incremental growth, but it should not be counted on to fund basic operations.

### **Foundation Provides Valuable Services, But Is Costly**

Although the foundation has not realized the original goals it does provide some valuable services for DCFS. However, the services they provide are costly and the cost effectiveness of the division's contract with UFCF is debatable.

### **Foundation Provides Good Services**

The foundation has provided some good services to the foster care system. These services are in areas where DCFS had neglected the needs of foster parents because of limited resources and caseworkers who were faced with heavy workloads. One of the things the foundation has done is refined their recruitment strategies to become more focused on actual needs within each region. They have also provided quality education and training programs for foster parents. Record keeping is now centrally located and trainees are kept informed of their progress effectively. The

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Recruitment efforts are now focused on specific regional needs.

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foundation does have a role with retention as indicated in the contract, and they have introduced some programs and steps to help with this area.

**Recruitment Is Focused on Needs.** Initially the foundation had some success at recruiting large numbers of people for foster care training and licensing. In September 1999, the foundation took over the recruitment duty from DCFS. There were only 958 licensed foster homes in the state at the time. In December 2000, the number had increased to 1,272 licensed foster homes statewide.

However, this strategy of mass recruiting was not the best solution for solving the problems of the foster population. Some of the people recruited and trained were not appropriate providers for the type of children in custody and others had specific requests for infants or small children of which there was not a large supply. Consequently, a significant number of newly recruited and licensed foster parents dropped out and failed to renew their licenses. This is shown as the ratio of closures to new licensees increased from September 1999 through April 2002. For example, from September 1999 through August 2000 there were 508 new licenses and 385 closures, a ratio of .76 closures for each new license. From September 2000 through August 2001 there were 572 new licenses and 608 closures, a ratio of 1.06 closures per new license. From September 2001 through April 2002 there have been 280 new licenses and 407 closures, a ratio of 1.45 closures per new license issued.

In the second year of operation, the foundation changed its strategy in order to target recruitment of providers that would meet the specific needs of the foster children in each region. In collaboration with DCFS, they started conducting periodic needs assessments to determine the age, sex, ethnic and religious background, and other important characteristics about each foster child in the region. This new strategy caused the foundation to focus recruitment on some specific areas of need in various parts of the state such as Hispanic families, Native American families, deaf families, families willing to accept older children, sibling groups, and children with special behavioral needs. This targeted recruitment, based on a needs assessment, has been helpful to the system.

**Good Training and Education Are Provided.** We contacted several of the DCFS regional directors and the licensing administrators to discuss the training provided by the foundation. They generally agreed that the foundation had done a good job with education and had made some improvements to the foster parent training. They reported that the

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Foster parent training and education are arguably better than before.

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foundation had standardized the training and made it more accessible. The foundation is able to provide better education and tracking of trainee records because they specialize in it and they don't have the multiple responsibilities of the caseworkers and trainers who previously provided the training.

It is difficult to measure quantitatively the level of improvement to the system because there are no test scores for comparison. There are some positive indicators that show the quality of education has improved. One such indicator is that graduation percentages have improved steadily over the past three years. For example, from September 1999 when the foundation took over the education until the end of the year, the graduation rate of people registered for pre-service training was 26 percent. The graduation rate for the calendar year beginning January 2000 was 46 percent. For the last calendar year beginning January 2001, the graduation rate was 55 percent. We feel this shows the foundation is doing a good job to ensure success at the beginning of the recruitment process. The initial contacts are screened and if they continue to show interest, they are visited at their home for observation and for additional screening before they can begin the foster parent training program. Those who do enroll in training and graduate are well trained, and perhaps better prepared to become licensed providers.

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**Record keeping and tracking of licensees has improved.**

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Record keeping of training and education is another area where the foundation has provided effective services to the system. When DCFS conducted the training, records were kept locally by trainers or caseworkers around the state. There was no central database of training records. It was difficult to tell who was currently in training, who had completed training, and who was up for renewal. The foundation created a tracking system which centralized the record keeping function and made it easier to track and review progress of trainees. Centralized record keeping also helps assure that licensees are notified when they need on-going annual training or when they need to renew their licenses. We feel the foundation has improved training and education by centralizing the record keeping and making it more efficient and reliable.

Another example of the good service provided by the foundation is that they have made the training more accessible. The foundation translated training and resource materials from English to Spanish in order to facilitate and make education accessible to the targeted Hispanic population. They also hired a bi-lingual trainer to teach pre-service education to the Hispanic population. Interpreters and 'signers' have also

been hired so that foster parent education courses can be provided to the hearing impaired population. This is an important revision to the system because previously the hearing impaired foster children had to be placed out-of-state, which was very costly for the division.

Feedback on foster parent training has been mostly positive and this is another indicator that they are providing good services. Annual surveys conducted of licensees exiting the system contained several questions related to the training provided by the foundation. Consumers were asked if pre-service training adequately prepared them to make informed decisions about fostering. A strong majority, of 90 percent, agreed with this statement.

**Retention Efforts Are Improving.** At first the foundation focused their efforts on recruitment and training in order to increase the total number of licensed foster families. While they were successful at bringing many new people into the system, they discovered that people were exiting the system faster than they were coming in. For example, during 2001, for every three new families brought into the system, four families exited the system. To combat this problem, the foundation initiated annual exit surveys to determine the reasons why people were terminating their licenses. The foundation realized that this is a problem to share with their partners in the foster care system, the Office of Licensing and the Division of Child and Family Services. This exit survey information, gathered by the foundation, has been useful for all coordinating agencies and organizations to identify problems and determine solutions.

Good relationships and case management between DCFS caseworkers and foster families is critical for the retention of foster parents. To this end, DCFS provides Resource Family Consultants to support foster families and to be a liaison between the families and workers. Peer support among foster/adoptive families is also important but not enough was being done. In September 2001, the foundation implemented a pilot 'cluster' program to help meet the need for peer support and improve the retention of foster families. This program is designed to build a network of resource foster families who live nearby each other and who can provide peer support for each other. Foster parents belonging to 'clusters' can help each other out with temporary respite care and they can share experiences to learn what has been beneficial and what has not worked.

It is difficult to measure the cluster program's effect on retention but we believe it is working. Besides providing peer support, cluster groups

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Exit surveys have helped identify problems and focus more efforts on retention.

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Cluster groups have provided support to foster parents.

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facilitate on-going training for foster parents to renew their licenses. The cluster program is supported by the DCFS, the Foster Family Association, and the foundation. There is a statewide facilitator for the clusters program and it is currently operating at a formal level in the Salt Lake Region, the Northern Region, and part of the Eastern Region. It is functioning at an informal level in the Western and Southwestern regions. DCFS regional directors would like to see this program and other retention programs available in all regions of the state.

### **Foundation Costs Are Significant**

While UFCF provides good services, they are costly to DCFS. It was difficult to isolate the costs of recruitment and training when it was under the direction of the DCFS but the business plan estimated it at around \$600,000 for fiscal year 1998. The cost of the services provided by the foundation are considerably higher. Since fund raising has not been successful, it has not been available to offset the higher costs; instead, DCFS contract payments have been used and have steadily increased. In addition, there are several other costs such as compensation and occupancy that make the overall operations more expensive for the foundation. Because of the higher costs, the cost effectiveness of the contract is debatable.

**Contract Cost Has Steadily Increased.** During the first few years of operations the contract was amended multiple times and increased in value from \$1 million to over \$2.7 million for the current fiscal year—an increase of over 170 percent.

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**Foundation's costs have steadily increased over the years.**

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**Figure 6. DCFS Contracts with UFCF Have Steadily Increased the Funding.** Fund-raising expectations included in the contract have been eliminated.

Fiscal Year	Funding Sources	Initial Contract	Amended Contract
2000	DCFS Funds*	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,800,000
	UFCF Fund Raising	<u>1,169,500</u>	<u>369,500</u>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,169,500</b>	<b>\$ 2,169,500</b>
2001	DCFS Funds*	\$ 2,200,000	\$ 2,653,000
	UFCF Fund Raising	<u>750,000</u>	<u>190,000</u>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,950,000</b>	<b>\$ 2,843,000</b>
2002	DCFS Funds*	\$ 2,715,000	
	UFCF Fund Raising	<u>-0-</u>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,715,000</b>	

\* Includes state and federal funds.

As shown in Figure 6, fund-raising expectations decreased each year as the amount of DCFS funding increased. In other words, more and more of the obligation for funding fell upon the division as the fund raising hopes dwindled.

The division has been able to pay for the contract with additional funds appropriated by the Legislature and federal matching funds. In the 2000 and 2001 general sessions combined, an extra \$1 million of on-going general funds was provided for DCFS to contract with the foundation. For fiscal year 2002, the division expects to obtain about \$947,000 in federal matching funds for the foundation's activities.

While the cost to provide recruitment, training and support of foster parents has gone up considerably over the past several years, the average number of licensed foster homes has not increased significantly and, in some cases, it has gone down causing an increase to the average cost per family as shown in Figure 7.

**Figure 7. Average Annual Cost Per Foster Family Has Increased.**  
 The costs to recruit and train foster families has increased significantly with the foundation.

	DCFS	Foster Care Foundation		
	FY1998	FY2000	FY2001	FY2002
Average Number of Foster Homes	1,161	1,053	1,236	1,110
Estimated Costs - Recruit & Train*	\$ 600,000	\$ 1.44 mil	\$ 2.122 mil	\$ 2.172 mil
Cost Per Foster Home	\$ 517	\$ 1,368	\$ 1,717	\$ 1,957

\* DCFS cost estimate from foundation business plan. UFCF cost estimates based on 80 percent of DCFS contract amounts. UFCF financial audit indicates 80 percent of program expenditures were attributed to recruitment and training.

In fiscal year 1998, the estimated costs for DCFS included only the recruitment and training functions. When the foundation took over these services in FY 2000, they agreed to provide recruitment, training and a small level of support. This partly explains the rise in costs but also it was expected that costs would go up because not enough was being done in the recruitment and training. The foundation was expected to increase and intensify the efforts in these areas. Another explanation for increased costs per foster home was that the fund-raising goals were never reached and the division was left to pick up the slack. DCFS ended up paying for more of the incremental costs than they had anticipated.

**Additional Costs Are Tied to the Foundation.** There are some additional costs paid by the foundation that would not be necessary if DCFS were providing the service. These added costs make the foundation an expensive service provider and raise questions about the cost effectiveness of contracting out the education and recruitment of foster parents.

- **Employee salaries** are generally greater for the foundation employees than for similar positions at DCFS.
- **Employee benefits** such as insurance cost the foundation more for similar coverage because they are a small organization without the benefit of large group discounts.
- **Office space** for the foundation is more expensive than it would be in a state owned facility.

We compared various salaries of foundation employees with salaries of comparable positions at DCFS. We found that hourly salaries are generally greater for the foundation employees. These comparisons are shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8. Salary Comparison.** Average salaries are greater for foundation workers.

<b>Salary Comparison by Position</b>	<b>Hourly Average</b>	<b>Percent Difference</b>
<i>UFCF President</i>	\$ 39.26	
DHS Administrator III	28.35	38.5%
DHS Community Services Manager	24.60	59.6
<i>UFCF Program Director</i>	\$ 24.51	
DHS Program Coordinator II	23.47	4.4%
<i>UFCF Regional Trainer</i>	\$ 21.48	
DHS Trainer III	18.74	14.6%
<i>UFCF Foster/Adoptive Recruiter</i>	\$ 18.54	
DHS Social Service Worker	15.25	21.6%
DHS Human Service Worker	12.68	46.2

Salaries are always difficult to compare because positions don't match up identically. We consulted with staff at the foundation and at DCFS to compare duties and responsibilities of the various positions and to get the comparisons as close as possible. The foundation President doesn't really match up to any specific position in DCFS, but we felt the responsibilities were similar to the DCFS Regional Directors (DHS Administrator III). Other positions were not identical in nature but they were close enough in responsibilities and duties for comparison purposes.

Many of the foundation employees have worked for DCFS and they acknowledged that salaries are higher for comparable positions. Several rationalizations were given for the higher pay. When the foundation started up, the board members were so intent on making it a successful venture, they believed they needed the most qualified people available to fill the positions. They felt they had to pay a higher salary to attract the

best applicants. DCFS administrators concur that some of their best employees left the division to work for the foundation. In addition, foundation workers say they are paid a salary, not an hourly wage. They claim they work many more hours than the required 40 hours per week. Consequently, their salaries while higher on paper, are actually overstated because of the additional work they do. We reviewed a sample of time sheets from November 2000 thru October 2001 and found that most UFCF staff do, indeed, report working more than 40 hours per week.

We also compared benefits to learn the differences between the foundation and DCFS. The foundation offers dental, life, health, and optical insurance—similar to what is offered by DCFS. The insurance packages are not easy to compare because there are many variables such as premiums, co-pays, and amount of coverage. The total insurance cost for the foundation is about 21 percent of total salaries. Similarly, for the division, the total insurance cost is 26% of salaries. However, the costs are greater overall for the foundation because salaries are typically higher. For example, at DCFS the employer's share of the premium for family health insurance is \$616 per month. The employer's share of the premium at the foundation is \$742 per month or 20 percent greater. Premiums for dental insurance are almost identical with the foundation paying \$70 per month for family dental and DCFS paying \$69 per month for family dental. Retirement benefits are virtually the same at about 12 percent of salaries, but like the insurance, the cost is greater to the employer because salaries are higher.

Because it is a separate organization and not part of the division, the foundation must pay for its own facility with parking, office space, office furnishings, phone systems, computers, and various office equipment. Some of these furnishings and facilities, while necessary, could be considered excessive in comparison to what the DCFS has for working space and furnishings. This is not to say that bringing the services back to the division would eliminate costs such as office space, parking, office furnishings and equipment. These costs would continue but they would be minimized because office space and furnishings would be downgraded. Occupancy cost in a state-owned facility would be decreased considerably. For example, the foundation pays the annual rate of about \$16.80 per square foot to lease office space in their current location. They lease about 6,600 square feet of space and they pay for 10 parking stalls at the cost of \$75 per month. All total, it costs about \$119,880 per year to lease their current facility. Similar floor space in the Human Services building would

cost about \$9.07 per foot per year and there would be no cost for the parking. This works out to be about \$59,862 per year. In other words, the foundation is paying about \$60,000 more per year to lease their current office space. In summary, it costs more to house the recruitment and training services in a separate location.

**Cost Effectiveness of the Foundation Is Debatable.** Given the increasing costs for the services, one must ask if the division could provide the same services at a better price. While the foundation provides valuable services, it is expensive for the state and this leaves the cost effectiveness in doubt. DCFS pays considerably more to the foundation than it previously spent to recruit and train. According to the business plan, DCFS spent about \$600,000 to recruit and train foster families in 1998; an amount that was expected to increase to about \$900,000 by 2002. The division now pays the foundation \$2.7 million to perform these functions.

We don't know whether DCFS could have taken the additional state funds, that have gone into the foundation's operations, and used them more productively. Some DCFS staff express frustration with how much the foundation costs; yet, they are reluctant to consider bringing foster family recruitment and training back into the division because it is additional work and responsibility that is difficult not very rewarding. There are concerns that the child welfare system is so big and complex, the responsibility for foster family issues would get lost. Recently, some DCFS staff told us that given the state budget cutbacks, the contract with UFCF should be reconsidered. They feel the services provided by the foundation could be completed just as effectively by division staff at a much lower cost. If DCFS continues to contract with the foundation, both organizations should reexamine the role and activities of the foundation.

### **Role of Foundation Is Still Evolving**

Because it is a new and unique organization, the foundation has had to define itself and learn how it fits into the state's child welfare system. Similarly, the past few years have been a learning experience for DCFS as well. Some functions and funding were transferred to UFCF, but overall responsibility for the foster care system remains with the state. As the two

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**Foundation is still learning its role in the foster system and adjusting its goals to fit the needs of DCFS and the foster population.**

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organizations developed a new working relationship in the complex child welfare environment, some expectations have remained unclear.

The most recent contract between DCFS and the foundation appears to help clarify expectations, but the role of UFCF is still evolving. The original business plan provided a good road map to get the foundation going and to measure its achievements. But, given all the uncertainties in establishing a new organization, plans must change with experience. DCFS can help clarify the foundation's role and the type of accountability it expects. Likewise, the foundation should re-evaluate some of their activities and programs to decide how they can accomplish their objectives.

### **DCFS Should Reassess and Clarify the Foundation's Role**

DCFS is largely responsible for defining what the foundation does. Since the state is paying UFCF as a private contractor to provide services, it can spell out exactly what they must do to receive the funds. A contract between DCFS and the foundation formally defines the scope of work expected from the foundation and the amount it will be paid.

However, a number of factors may have made it difficult for the division to provide a lot of direction to the foundation. Initially, the transfer of functions resulted in some uncertainty about what each organization would be responsible for. Since the foundation is a private organization under contract with DCFS, it also seemed that the division's need to direct the foundation was limited; private funds and private direction was expected. In addition, since the UFCF was the Governor's initiative and supported by the Legislature, some DCFS staff were reluctant to be too assertive in directing the foundation. Finally, the overlapping membership of the DCFS and UFCF boards raises a concern. It's difficult to expect state staff to hold the foundation to the same level of accountability they require of other contractors when two of their board members also sit on the UFCF board.

In the current fiscal year 2002 contract, we feel the division has developed a better process for directing the foundation. DCFS regional staff define their particular needs and negotiate with the foundation for the targeted number of foster families to be recruited and trained as well as the type and number of training sessions to be presented. The new contract also addresses retention services in more detail than prior contracts.

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**There appears to be some confusion about roles and responsibilities.**

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This helps in clarifying the foundation’s responsibility for foster family support, but more specification is needed. We feel DCFS has improved the contract but it still needs to follow up with better monitoring of the foundation performance.

**Foster Family Support Expectations Need More Clarification.**

The planning group that developed the initial business plan for the foundation envisioned transferring foster family recruitment and training from DCFS, but leaving “ultimate responsibility for providing support to individual foster parents” with state staff. Therefore, resource family consultant positions stayed with DCFS, while funds for recruitment and training staff transferred to the foundation. However, the retention of existing foster families is a key issue for both organizations, as is foster families support.

The foundation has always recognized that the retention of foster families is critical because it affects the number of families that need to be recruited and trained. But, planners decided to keep the relationship with foster families primarily a state function since DCFS must determine and monitor child placement decisions. Keeping foster family support a state function, while contracting for recruitment and training, has created some misunderstanding between DCFS and the foundation. Foundation staff view their primary role as producing new foster families; division staff has the primary responsibility to support the families.

Although foundation staff think of foster family support as the division’s role, prior contracts have included some responsibilities in this area. For example, the scope of work included in the first contract included, “Supporting resource [foster] families by supplying staff support, identifying common issues, encouraging peer support, and connecting available resources.” The second contract added a shared responsibility with the division for “implementation of a ‘cluster’ pilot program.” The third and current contract provides a detailed list of “retention program services”; however, our discussions with both organizations indicates that foster family support and retention roles remain ambiguous.

**DCFS Should Improve Contract Monitoring.** Regardless of how the expectations for the foundation are determined, DCFS should improve how it monitors performance. Although there was frequent communication between DCFS and the foundation, there have not been

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DCFS should pay more attention to the contract and improve the monitoring and evaluation.

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regular and consistent in depth contract reviews with attention to specific details. The prior and current contracts have included outcome measures but until this year, there has been very little formal monitoring of the contract performance.

Performance measurement was expected to be a key part of the private/public relationship. According to **Utah Code**, the foundation should have “a system for evaluating performance and obtaining feedback on the activities performed.” The business plan also envisioned a strong evaluation component at the foundation, “enabling the foster care system to continuously improve.” According to an early foundation document, “the state will pay only for a product—the recruitment, training, and retention of qualified foster families. The relationship will be highly driven by performance.” The division’s Milestone Plan and other sources from the time also describe expectations for a “performance-based contract.”

While the foundation does measure performance, it seems to fall short of what was expected. For a time, the foundation had a quality assurance officer, but it later decided that funds were better spent on other activities. The staff produces a considerable amount of performance data but we are uncertain how it is used by the division to make contract adjustments.

One problem with performance-based contracting is deciding what to measure and how to adjust the contract. Initially, the one clear measurable objective for the foundation was to have 3,000 foster families by year-end 2000, but that proved unrealistic. The foundation’s second contract lowered the goal 1,500 foster families, but that level has never been achieved, either. While these numerical goals are easily measured, they don’t address vital issues about the location and type of foster families available.

With the improved contract developed by DCFS, it still needs to decide how to hold the foundation accountable by measuring performance and adjusting the contract accordingly. As mentioned earlier, the current contract provides that each DCFS region negotiates plans and goals with the foundation. The division reports that each region is also preparing an evaluation of how well the foundation has fulfilled the plan. Based on the assessment of how well UFCF is meeting the needs for specific types of foster family homes, DCFS may be able to make adjustments in the next UFCF contract.

## **Foundation Needs to Re-evaluate Some Activities**

The foundation is still in the learning phase, discovering what works and what does not and what are the best ways to do things. Some of their initial ideas and goals may still have merit but they need more refinement. For example, the volunteer program was abruptly cut back and redirected without a clear determination of its effectiveness. Volunteer participation may still be valid but the program needs more thought and direction. In addition, there are several areas where costs and expenditures could be minimized or eliminated. Finally, the foundation's fund-raising objectives are not clearly spelled out. If fund raising continues to be a goal of the foundation, we feel there should be targets tied to specific objectives so that donations are dedicated to a purpose.

**Volunteer Program Needs New Direction.** According to its current work plan, part of the foundation's mission is to "dramatically increase the number of quality child welfare volunteers" and to provide a diversity of volunteers and volunteer activities. This was to be accomplished through strategic statewide recruitment, orientation, and training. Some of the goals for volunteers, as mentioned in the program of work, seem to be lofty and not well thought out. For example, one goal for fiscal years 2001 and 2002 was to provide a total of 1,000 volunteers per year to the foster care system. We are not sure how the foundation came up with this goal but we have several questions such as: how to count the number of volunteers; how they would be used; and, how to effectively measure utilization. We also wonder if 1,000 volunteers per year were actually needed—because, based on annual reports of the volunteer program, it appears there were more volunteers available than could be used.

**Foundation Should Strive to Control Costs Wherever Possible.** Another part of the mission is that the "Foundation will cost-effectively recruit and train foster care families." As a new organization under contract with the division, it is important that the foundation be frugal with their expenditures. In light of the recent state budget cutbacks, the foundation members must be aware that they are under scrutiny by the division, the contract administrators, and everyone involved with the foster care system. The division wants to be assured that the foundation is providing equal or better service without significant cost increases. Legislators and the public also want to see judicious and efficient use of public funding. Foundation members should know that any expenditures that appear to be unnecessary will be questioned.

Duplication of resources is one of the unavoidable costs associated with the foundation providing a service that was once under the purview of DCFS. Therefore, costs should be conserved wherever possible. One area where cost savings are possible is in the lease of office space and equipment. The lease expense for the year ended September 30, 2000 and for the nine months ended June 30, 2001 was \$133,000 and \$115,000 respectively. The minimum lease payment for the year ended June 30, 2002 is \$144,000. Along with the lease of the office space is parking costs for employees and visitors which average \$18,000 per year. We question the need for the foundation to be located at this expensive downtown office space. Initially, board members felt it was important to be located near the Capitol for lobbying purposes and also in nice downtown office space where corporations and potential donors could be pursued. Foundation staff and board members are mindful of the expense and are considering ways to reduce the office lease. Unfortunately, they are locked into a long-term lease on the property.

Another area where costs could be conserved is in the salary of the development director. This position has been filled twice in the three years of the foundation's operations. It was recently vacated and has not yet been filled. In our observation, the position has not been very productive in the past and perhaps should be eliminated. Funds development is a difficult proposition and cannot be done without making a lot of contacts and cultivation of relationships. The foundation President has already made many of the contacts with potential donors and has been cultivating relationships with them since the beginning. In our opinion, the duties of the development director fall in line with what the President is already doing. It makes sense to have the President take over these duties and leave the position unfilled.

**Foundation's Fund-raising Objectives Are Not Clear.** Initially, it seems that private funds were expected to help support operations. According to a 1999 foundation report, the "unique public/private relationship empowers funding from government as well as the business and civic community." One of the reasons to establish the foundation was to tap private funds as was clearly stated in the early organizational goals. The fund-raising target was high according to a board report from April 2000. In this summary the development director outlined potential fund-raising sources to the board and reported that of the \$5.4 million that had been requested, anticipated receipts were about \$3 million. Foundation staff feel that these projections were not realistic and they came from a

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Fund raising needs purpose, direction, and commitment to be effective.

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young, inexperienced development director who was overly optimistic. Nevertheless, DCFS staff were assured that the foundation would use “fund raising and volunteers to accomplish much of its work.” According to the original business plan,

DCFS will, through its contractual relationship with the foundation, fund a significant percentage of the foundation’s activities. In addition, the foundation, given its private, not-for-profit status, will aggressively solicit contributions from private sources.

More recently, the foundation continued to recognize the importance of fund raising in their development work plan for FY 2002. It states, “In as much as the costs to recruit, train, and retain an adequate number of foster parents has and will continue to outpace the resources available from DCFS, the Utah Foster Care Foundation must aggressively pursue alternative funding sources.” Some of their fund-raising goals are shown Figure 9.

**Figure 9. UFCF Fund-Raising Goals Have Been Ambitious.** In January 2000, the fund-raising goals for Fiscal Year 2001 and 2002 were established.

<b>Goal 1: Obtain funding for creation of programs to meet goals of UFCF without regard for the limitations of DCFS funding.</b>		
Objective 1 -	Corporate Contributions	\$ 450,000
Objective 2 -	Direct Mail	50,000
Objective 3 -	Giving Club or Association	100,000
Objective 4 -	Major Giving	200,000
<b>Goal 2: Obtain funding to meet the incremental costs of current programs not covered by DCFS funding.</b>		
Objective 1 -	Foundation Grants	\$ 200,000
<b>Goal 3: Obtain funding to enable the UFCF to own its own facilities</b>		
Objective 1 -	Individual and Corporate	\$1,000,000

In spite of the optimism and ambitious goals, the foundation found that fund raising was not an easy task. After experiencing difficulty and having little success raising funds, the foundation turned to DCFS to fund all its operational expenses.

On September 20, 2000, the Board of Trustees of the UFCF signed a resolution stating they had experienced resistance from private contributors who perceive the Corporation's operational funding needs to be the responsibility of the State of Utah. Therefore, they would seek funding from DCFS for all of their operational expenses and not solicit private contributors for operational funds. The resolution stated, however, that they would maintain a proactive program to solicit private contributions, which would be used to create and enlarge a perpetual endowment fund for the long term purposes and success of the Corporation. These contributions would be earmarked and used at the discretion of the board of directors for special programs and activities outside of those considered operational. Since the first year of operations, however, we have not seen any significant fund raising that would feed the endowment fund. According to the board chairman, the endowment fund has never materialized and the fund-raising objectives need new direction.

## **Recommendations**

1. We recommend that DCFS work with the UFCF to more clearly define their roles pertaining to support and retention of foster families.
2. We recommend that DCFS continue to improve its contract monitoring of UFCF by regularly evaluating the foundation's progress and efforts and providing detailed feedback about the division's needs and expectations. If DCFS determines that the foundation is not cost-effectively meeting the division's needs, they should consider providing the services with the division staff rather than contracting for them.
3. We recommend that the foundation reconsider the purpose and objectives of the volunteer program.
4. We recommend that the foundation look for ways to control costs and efficiently utilize their resources.

5. We recommend that the foundation clearly identify fund-raising objectives and clarify how they plan to use the donations. The foundation should also determine whether or not a perpetual endowment fund will be established.

**Agency Responses**

June 19, 2002

Mr. Wayne Welsh, CPA  
Auditor General  
Office of the Legislative Auditor General  
130 State Capitol  
PO Box 140151  
Salt Lake City, UT 841 14-0151

Re:

Report no. 2002-04

### **Executive Summary**

This unique, bold experiment implemented by the Utah Legislature and Executive Office has rewarded the State of Utah! The Utah Foster Care Foundation is one of the best investments the State has produced. Tens of thousands of dollars, if not millions have been saved by Utah because of innovative and creative services rendered by the Foundation. As one component of the child welfare system, the Foundation has focused its efforts on this single important function--- to recruit, train, and support foster families who deliver important human services to Utah.

The religious community of Utah has embraced the efforts of the Utah Foster Care Foundation. While all churches have supported the Foundation, the LDS Church and the Catholic Church through announcements from the pulpit and financial donations have generated special support.

The Foundation has demonstrated the ability to increase the number of foster homes and recruit families based upon the needs of children in care, including geographical needs, specialized needs, ethnicity, and cultural sensitivity. The prescreening process for potential foster families as resources has improved the preparedness and caliber of participants in pre-service training classes.

Our 32 hours of pre-service training has demonstrated consistent quality statewide. The entire curriculum and training has been translated into Spanish to provide adequate understanding of the requirements, obligations and preparations to serve as Spanish speaking families in their primary language. Our training program has resulted in no negligent training lawsuits against the State during the past three years.

The formation of foster families into innovative “Cluster Groups” of 15 to 25 families provide strong mentoring, support, training, volunteers and respite for foster families. This and other support services sustain foster families in their work.

The Foundation has utilized the 1997 Monitor Study, commissioned by the State, as a guide for organizational structure. It is focused upon quality of services. In 1997, Governor Leavitt stressed the need for additional foster families in a “visionary statement” to emphasize a change in direction.

It is gratifying to note that other states and child welfare agencies are now turning to Utah as a potential model for the future. We are delighted to share our successes and accomplishments.

Foster care remains a challenging issue for the State of Utah. This is consistent with all other states. The Foundation will continue to evolve and adjust to the child welfare needs of Utah and its communities. The Utah Foster Care Foundation pledges to be party to the ongoing improvement of this important human service.

Dear Mr. Welsh;

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the agency response to A Performance Audit of the Utah Foster Care Foundation. We are grateful to your staff for their professionalism and diligence in understanding the purposes for why the Foundation was created. Because of the uniqueness of our organization, which is a work in progress, there are no comparable agencies for direct assessment. However, your staff created and utilized interview techniques to explore key outcomes and accomplishments. Further, we appreciate the open communication that we experienced during the audit process. The process has given us new insights to improving our agency in the future.

The Utah Foster Care Foundation is a successful, bold undertaking to address pressing needs in child welfare. We are truly a work in progress. Of all the responsibilities the State of Utah assumes, foster care is of paramount importance because the State becomes the temporary parent to vulnerable children with troubled histories. This duty is dependent upon well-prepared, properly trained foster families to assist children in out-of-home care to achieve their potential.

The Foundation has reviewed the recommendations set forth in this audit. They are consistent with our internal communications, as we have assessed our direction. We welcome the five recommendations set forth in the spirit for which they are given and we pledge our talents and resources to implement them. We acknowledge and appreciate our strong partnership with the Division of Child and Family Services. Our synergy will bring about rapid consideration for change. The Foundation takes great pride in our flexibility and creativity for change and we are willing and able to make adjustments as needed.

The foundation offers these additional observations and comments regarding this report.

### **QUALITY**

The Foundation was keenly aware that general recruitment strategies and goals were not going to meet the specific placement needs of children in foster care and developed measures to address the quality of the families that were being recruited and trained.

- For the past two years, regional staff from the Foundation and DCFS have partnered to assess the placement needs of children in out-of-home care and develop goals and regional recruitment plans for the numbers and types of families to be recruited and trained. These plans are signed by each DCFS Regional Director.
- To ensure that the skills, expectations and motivations of prospective foster and adoptive families are consistent with the placement needs of the children in care, the Foundation developed and implemented an “initial consultation” process to orient and pre-screen prospective families. This process was implemented statewide in January of 2001 and has contributed not only to the overall quality of resource families but also to increased completions of pre-service training.
- According to DCFS, resource families are better prepared to care for special needs children and more willing to assume tasks such as mentoring birth parents to support the state’s reunification efforts. The Division also reports a decrease in the need to deny placements to newly licensed foster parents due to the increased efforts to educate resource families prior to introducing them to the system. The rate of substantiated allegations of abuse in foster care has decreased substantially in the last three years and there have been no negligent training lawsuits since the Foundation began providing training statewide.
- Though the number of children in foster care has decreased, the Foundation has increased the number of recruited and trained families, helping to increase the number of licensed foster families statewide. DCFS reports that this has led to a reduction of higher cost placements outside the foster care system.

### **COMPLIANCE**

- The Foundation has helped to increase the state’s compliance with federal standards through its recruitment and training efforts.
  - **ASFA** (Adoption and Safe Families Act). The Foundation has actively recruited and trained families who are willing to provide foster care and adoption services to expedite permanency for children and decrease the number of placements a child experiences.
  - **MEPA** (Multi-Ethnic Placement Act) requires that states develop a written plan of how they will recruit families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in care. The Foundation has developed regional recruitment plans that specifically target such families and developed a campaign to specifically reach Hispanic families since Hispanic children are over represented in the state’s foster care system.

- o **ICWA** (Indian Child Welfare Act) requires states to place children with Native American heritage in Native American homes. The Foundation has collaborated with the Indian Walk-In Center and tribes to recruit and train Native American foster homes.

## **INNOVATIONS**

Several additional services have been added to the foster care system in Utah through the efforts of the Foundation.

- Recruitment and training materials have been translated into Spanish and translators are provided for deaf and hearing-impaired trainings
- The Foundation has been a catalyst to increase partnerships between agencies serving children and families
- Increased support services to resource families and the foster care system through direct and indirect service volunteers
- Resource Family “Cluster” support groups to provide resources, including in-service training in local communities and increased respite options
- In a three-year period, the Foundation has secured approximately 3.5 million in cash, in-kind donations, goods and services. This total does not include the estimated value of volunteer hours
- Effective partnerships have been formed with the religious and business communities to help recruit and support foster families
- “Getting to Know You” luncheons for new foster parents to meet foster care workers and regional brown-bag discussions to facilitate problem solving
- Statewide monthly Foster Roster newsletter for foster families and partners
- Annual Appreciation Events to honor foster families, foster care workers and volunteers
- Increased resources for foster families and children including Christmas Stores, in-kind donation drives and special needs funds
- Foster Parent Exit Survey to provide insight for improved retention strategies
- Improved data tracking for all foster parent training and recruitment
- Regional quarterly and statewide semi-annual reports to DCFS
- Additional assessments and surveys to monitor needs and outcomes

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The Foundation has received local and national recognition and awards for its innovative and enhanced services.

- The recruitment program’s strategies and outcomes have been published by Casey Family Programs, Child Welfare League of America and the National Children’s Bureau
- Recruitment and Education program directors have been invited to present at national conferences including the National Foster Parent Association and International TRAINet Conference
- American Society of Association Executives Advance America Honor Roll, for outstanding programs which have resulted in significant benefit to American society:

*2002 Hispanic Families Recruitment Campaign*

2002 Foster Family Appreciation Events

2001 Foster Family Recruitment

*2001 Foster Family Neighborhood Cluster Program*

- Council on State Governments 2000 Innovations award
- UFCF volunteer/Foster Parent, Michelle Bartholomew received a 2002 Governor's Silver Bowl Award
- UFCF volunteer Rachel Moore received 2001 Diane W. Jorgenson Mentor of the Year Award
- A 2000 "Telly" award for a non-profit television commercial

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to respond to this audit.

Sincerely,

Dallis J. Pierson  
President

Dr. Kay Dea  
Chairman  
Dean, Graduate School of Social  
University of Utah

Richard L. Shipley  
Founding Chair

June 18, 2002

Wayne Welsh  
Office of the Legislative Auditor (eneral  
State of Utah  
130 State Capitol  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-0151

Dear Mr. Welsh

Thank you for the Performance Audit of the Utah Foster Care Foundation. The Division is appreciative of the information that has been gathered and analyzed by the auditors and values the clarity in which it is presented. It is beneficial for us to receive this type of report that clearly reflects a broad view of Utah Foster Care Foundation and provides us with an objective assessment to help us as we renegotiate our contract.

I would like to take a moment to respond to the following recommendations from the Performance Audit.

**1. DCFS work with UFCF to more clearly define their roles pertaining to support and retention of foster families.**

The contract with the Utah Foster Care Foundation clearly outlines on page 5 —7 in **Part II** the Retention Program Services. These pages include a detailed retention plan that includes: 1) serve as point person for the Clusters Program, 2) conduct foster family regional retention needs assessments, 3) contact foster parents who are preparing for relicensure within 60 — 90 days prior to re-licensing, 4) recruit and supervise direct and indirect service volunteers, 5) coordinate with the adoption community in providing support to resource families, 6) oversee and assist with foster parent exit surveys, 7) create regional/statewide monthly Foster Roster newsletters, 8) assist DCFS in organizing caseworker and newly licensed family luncheons, 9) organize foster parent, caseworker and volunteer recognition and appreciation events, and 10) work to increase participation of community businesses and individuals in supporting foster families. As noted in the contract “ the Contractor’s retention services are designed to aid DHS/DCFS in its resource family retention efforts. Due to a limited budget in this program, services shall be offered in the following DCFS/DHS Regions: Salt Lake Valley Region, Northern Region, and Grand and San Juan Counties in Eastern Region.”

It will be beneficial for DCFS to clarify how the UFCF role in retention is to work hand in hand with the Resource Family Consultant role within the Division. We have begun this discussion with the Foundation just recently and have been assured of their continued services to retain foster families.

**2. DCFS continue to improve its monitoring of the foundations progress and efforts, providing detailed information about the division's needs and expectations.**

The monitoring plan that was implemented with the foundation for fiscal year 2002 will continue with some improvements in FY 2003. The division and foundation have agreed to have two statewide administration meetings each year to evaluate progress and efforts toward the contract objectives. The foundation will meet individually two additional times with each region to review recruitment and retention plans and outcomes. The division will produce written reports of these meetings showing issues addressed, plans for improvements and outcomes of those specific plans.

**If DCFS determines that the foundation is not cost-effectively meeting the division's needs, they should consider providing the services within the division rather than contracting for them.**

The division acknowledges that there are some additional costs related to contracting out these services. If the agency were to bring the services back we would need fiscal support to provide these services from within.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or feedback. I can be reached at 538-4013. Once again let me express appreciation of the manner in which this report has been presented and the opportunity for us to obtain feedback that assists in making decisions within the division.

Sincerely,

Richard Anderson  
Director