

LOSE THE LABELS

The way we label issues tends to influence our thinking about them. Here are some suggested language changes as they apply to issues and services in child welfare.

Instead of saying this ...	Say this ...
Foster child <i>Implies that the child's entire identity is tied to being in foster care</i>	Child in foster care <i>Describes where the child is living</i>
Foster home	Foster family <i>Focus is on the people, not the house</i>
Damaged children <i>Young people in care state that furniture and cars can be damaged</i>	Children with special needs
Hard-to-place children <i>Implies that it is somehow the child's fault</i>	Hard-to-find families <i>It's up to DYFS to identify families for children who need a home</i>
"My adopted child"	"My son" or "My daughter"
Removal <i>Young people in care state that garbage and snow are removed</i>	Separation <i>Children are separated from their families.</i>
Caretaker <i>Implies that care is "taken"</i>	Caregiver <i>Demonstrates that care is something that is given</i>
Services to resource parents <i>Resource parents are not DYFS clients</i>	Supports for resource parents
Natural family <i>Implies that other families are unnatural</i>	Birth family or Family of origin
Relative placement or Relative care	Kinship care
Trainers and Trainees <i>Draws a line between those leading the training and those attending</i>	Training facilitators and Training participants <i>Participants are guided through an orientation process and are encouraged to actively participate and gain as much from the experience as possible</i>
Screening of resource families <i>Implies that DYFS is "omnipotent" and potentially unfair in their decision-making processes</i>	Families are selected "in" or selected "out" <i>Defines a more cooperative process to determine if becoming a resource family is the right decision</i>